THE CHRIST OF ENGLISH POETRY

BY C. W. STUBBS D.D.

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" *Angelus Faciei Ejus salvavit eos.*"

ISAIAH lxiii. 9

" *That one Face far from vanish rather grows,*
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Becomes my universe that feels and knows."

BROWNING

THE CHRIST OF ENGLISH POETRY

BEING THE HULSEAN LECTURES DELIVERED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE MCMIV–MCMV. BY CHARLES WILLIAM STUBBS, D.D. DEAN OF ELY AND HON. FELLOW OF SIDNEY SUSSEX COLLEGE

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TO

SIR OLIVER LODGE, D.Sc., LL.D., F.R.S., &c.

PRINCIPAL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM.

My dear Lodge,—I want, if you will let me, to dedicate this book to you, not only for the sake of "Auld Lang Syne" in Liverpool, but also because among the forces of the time which are most deeply influencing the religious thought of young Englishmen to-day, I count your writings. You may perhaps remember that at the close of a lecture, delivered a year or so ago at the Midland Institute under your chairmanship, in which I had suggested an analogy in regard to Shakespeare's Prospero, which you will find repeated in the third lecture of this course, you playfully said to me, "So then, you think Prospero was the poet himself: I had thought he had been a man of science." If you do me the honour to glance through these pages you will see that my chief object has been to impress upon my undergraduate congregation the doctrine that Personality is the mightiest force which God can bring to bear upon man, that the Supreme Personality in all history, the most potent factor in all civilised change and progress, is that of Jesus Christ, and how and why, therefore, this claim of Christ to supremacy in all human thought and action ought to affect and influence the moral character

no less than the intellectual attitude of every baptized disciple of Jesus. In these lectures I have endeavoured to show how this conception of Christ's Personality has been brought home to the English people, at four representative periods of our national life, by making my appeal, not to the witness of the Theologians, but to the witness of the Poets of England; and I have done so, because it seems to me that the Poets rather than the Theologians, or even the men of science, are the most representative, the most prophetic, the most clear-sighted, the most deep-hearted men of their time. You perhaps may think, others perhaps may think, that I should have been wiser as a Christian apologist if I had tried to read the lesson of Prospero's ideal allegory of human life from the scientific rather than the poetic point of view. It may be so. But you at least, among the foremost of our men of science to-day, are Poet enough to see (I quote your own words) "that God is One: that the Universe is an aspect and a revelation of God; that the Universe is struggling upward to a perfection not yet attained; that in the mighty process of evolution there is an eternal struggle towards more and more self-perception and fuller and more all-embracing existence of the Deity." There are theologians, no doubt, who will think that your further statement—that "The Christian idea of God is not that of a being outside the universe, above its struggles and advances, looking on and taking no part in the process, solely *exalted, beneficent, self-determined and complete; no, it is also that of a God which loves, which yearns, which suffers, which keenly laments the rebellious and misguided activity*

of the free agents whom He has brought into being as part of Himself, which enters into the storm and conflict, and is subject to conditions as a part of it all; conditions not artificial and transitory, but inherent in the process of producing free and conscious beings, and essential to the full self-development even of Deity"—falls somewhat short of a complete presentment of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. That is probable. But of this, I, at least, who am no theologian, am quite sure that if our men of science will only approach these great issues in your spirit of reverence and candour, and love of truth, there is a future of great hope for Theology: for Science will then have much to teach to Theology as to the true bearings both of the facts of revelation and of the phenomena of spiritual experience. Anyhow, for your attitude towards questions of Christian apology, I should like to thank you, not only for myself, but also on behalf of those young hearts for whom I have chiefly written these pages, in the hope that through a quickened interest in the witness of the English Poets to the Personality of Christ and to the Spirit of His Religion, they may be helped to gain some consciousness, if only by glimpse of His garment's hem, of the Mighty Figure in the Way before them, very man and very God.—Believe me, ever sincerely yours,

CHARLES W. STUBBS.

DEANERY, ELY,
December 6, 1905.

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"As Cynewulf's life fell within the reigns of two notable English kings, Offa and Egbert; as he was the contemporary of Charlemagne, and probably outlived him, and as we cannot suppose that he was wholly blind to the course of events in his own day, he may have had some premonition of the influence which his poetry would exert, and therefore have taken precautions that his name should not perish, by interweaving it into the substance of his verse. That he, like Alfred, loved the poetry of his native tongue, is beyond question. Caedmon, who knew no Latin, could only sing in English, if at all; Aldhem, who knew Latin, wrote only in that language; Bede has left us but one brief English poem, though the vigour which that displays is evidence that he was under no necessity of writing in Latin; so that Cynewulf is the first Christian poet who, being thoroughly conversant with Latin, deliberately adopted the vernacular as the vehicle for a considerable body of poetry, and in this showed himself at once a good scholar, a good Christian, and a good patriot."

A. S. Cook.

THE
CHRIST OF ENGLISH POETRY

LECTURE I

CYNEWULF

"*Worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.*"
—REVELATION XIX. 10.

IN the belief that "prophecy is an attribute of poetry rather than poetry an attribute of prophecy,"[1] I am proposing in the four lectures which it is my duty to deliver in this place, to ask you to consider with me the varied witness which has been borne by four representative poets of England, to the Person and the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Let me begin with a preliminary question.

What is the secret of that immortal story which now for more than sixty generations of Gospel readers has wrought its unfailing spell upon the heart of humanity? What is the source and origin of that compelling motive which alone in the experience of Christendom has been found potent to make bad men good, and to bring to good men the abiding vision of eternal life, the abiding vision of the best that is hidden in temporal things?

Is it not the central Presence of a unique and a compelling Personality felt through every page of those informal memoirs, which we know by the name of the Four Gospels? Personality is the mightiest force which God can bring to bear upon man, and the supreme Personality in all history, the most potent factor in all civilised change and progress is that of Jesus Christ. It is of this Personality that the evangelists speak to us. In the Gospels Jesus Christ Himself is *the* Gospel. And from first to last the spell of His story on our hearts and consciences never lessens.

We feel it as we begin to read the records of the infancy, where in the Prologue of St. Luke's Gospel, the Spirit of Hebrew poetry, in sacred canticles, in bursts of lyric joy, in the still sweeter stranger music falling from the magic sky, is vocal above the manger-cradle of Bethlehem. We feel it more strongly as we read on through the historic narrative of later years, where, as in St. Matthew's Gospel, a Royal Figure moves, claiming homage from all good men, by signs of power, by deeds of mercy, by words of love; a Prophet, whose message is always *Life means mission*, *Love means service;* a Teacher whose sayings because of their moral insight and spiritual beauty are always vibrant down the centuries; a Legislator whose gift to His people is not a model code of laws, but a law-making power inherent in the disciplined human character. We feel it again when with an added touch of dramatic realism St. Mark takes up the tale to tell us of the "strong Son of God," the Lord of Patience and of Pity, who wins His throne of spiritual royalty, and through suffering,

through self-discipline, through self-subordination, exhibits the majesty of a self-possessed manhood and the divine strength of a perfected will. We feel it most of all perhaps, as we approach the last tragic issue, where, as in St. John's Gospel, the divine glory of the Passion is revealed and the eternal motive of Christ is made plain, as the "law of the spirit of life" is seen acting upon the secret principles of the human will, setting humanity free from "the law of sin and of death," creating in the world a new order of spiritual evolution, which shall gradually bring the way of life of the disciple into perfect harmony with the duty-ideal of the Master.

But it is not only in the Gospel story, it is not only even in the writings of the immediately succeeding generation of believers, attempting to interpret the Gospel facts, that we feel that behind the wonderful teaching of Jesus there stands always the presence of His Creative Personality. It is also the witness of history. All through the ages of the Christian Church, side by side with the attempt to interpret the facts upon which the Gospel of man's redemption rests—the facts which underlie the doctrines of the Trinity and of the Incarnation, of the Forgiveness of Sins, of the Resurrection of the Body, and of the certainty of Eternal Life, of the consciousness of man's filial relationship with the Heavenly Father, of the Mission of the Comforter, and of the Apostolic Church—all in fact which by St. Paul is epitomised as "the preaching of Christ crucified"—there has been the endeavour to keep the picture of Christ's living Personality close before the eyes of the believer, for so only was it felt to be possible—it is the verdict of

experience—to reach the springs of the human heart, to kindle the personal devotion of the disciple of Jesus, to stir his imagination, to quicken his conscience, to compel his love. All indeed would have been lost for Christianity as an ethical force in the world, if men, busied too much with the task of perfecting a theological system, had suffered themselves permanently to lose or to undervalue the Personality of Christ Himself as the source of all holy inspiration. The presence of Christ in fact was a power which saved men from their sins by imbuing them with His Personality. The story of man's search after God, it is true, is a fine and a noble story, but it has always become an unspeakably pathetic story when the searcher —whether theologian or philosopher, whether monk or mystic—fogged, it may be, in the mist of scholasticism, or blinded by the dust of controversy, has lost sight of the Figure in the Way before him and has become deaf to the voice, saying, "Follow ME! I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." The ethical instinct, at any rate, of humanity turns inevitably from a system to a Person, from theories about Christ to Christ Himself. It is the Person of Christ which is the essential factor in the Christian religion. It is the spirit of Christ which makes us Christian, the spirit, which is not the letter of His Gospel, but the emanation of His Person. In a word, it is upon Christology rather than upon Theology, that the ultimate sanction for Christian conduct rests.

But is it not true, you will ask, that the picture of Jesus Christ, the conception of His Personality, has varied greatly from age to age? Yes, it is true. Jesus Christ is indeed the Light of the World, but the light, as

it were, has been broken up as by a prism, and to some eyes each colour of the spectrum in its turn has seemed to be the light's complete effulgence. You will see that that has been so nowhere more vividly than in the history of Christian art.

As you gaze upon the earliest Christian pictures, in the Roman catacombs, you cannot fail, I think, to recognise that the conception of Christ which was conveyed to the simple minds of the men of the second and third century by the gay and winsome figure of the Good Shepherd,[2] "with the happy sheep nestling upon His shoulder, with the pastoral pipes in His hand, blooming in immortal youth," must be very different from that of the men of a later age, for whom the gracious and gentle Pastor has given place to the crucified Sufferer, depicted in countless aspects of misery and woe, from the gaunt and ghastly crucifixes and Pietas and entombments of the early Florentines, to the sublime dignities of Michael Angelo, and of Tintoretto and of Correggio.

Nor, again, can you help feeling that the conception of Christ's Personality conveyed to the Italian Churchmen of the Middle Ages by the numberless pictures of the Madonna and Child, unfailing in their sweet and gentle lessons of the divinity of childhood and of mother's love, must be far different to that conveyed to the Flemish Christians of the fourteenth century by such a picture as the Van Eycks' "Worship of the Immaculate Lamb," with its sublime figure of the omnipotent Christ, the King in glory, enthroned and crowned, with hands outstretched, in royal priestly benediction of the world.

But a still more potent witness to the varying pictures of the Christ might, I think, be found in the pages of the poets of Christendom; indeed, I can conceive of few nobler, few more useful subjects of Christian apology, than an adequate exposition of the witness which has been borne by the Christian poets of every age to Christ and Christianity. The poets, perhaps, even more than the theologians, are the representative men of their own age; for each poet is, in a sense, the epitome of the imaginative life of his age and nation, sharing with his countrymen the raw materials of his art, though illuminating those materials with the light of his own genius. The poets therefore are the most prophetic, the most clear-sighted, the most deep-hearted men of their time. It is to their writings we may most wisely go if we would know what real spiritual insight is—there is in such things, remember, but one source of inspiration, for, as Christians, we believe there is but one Holy Spirit—if we would feel the true warm religious emotion of men's hearts rather than the cold intellectual thoughts of their minds; nay, if we would distinguish often between the religion of Christ and the religion of Christians; in a word, if we would find the very Christ Himself as He has been known and worshipped in every age.

I cannot, of course, in the time allotted to me as Hulsean Lecturer, undertake any such task. Obviously for a complete presentation of such a subject covering the whole field of Church history, a much wider canvas than mine would be necessary.

But I think it may be useful to delimit a small portion of that field, and to endeavour, from the history of

the English Church and nation at four representative periods of the national life, to sketch the teaching of four representative English poets in regard to the Personality of Christ and the spirit of His teaching.

That at any rate is the subject which I am proposing to discuss with you in the four lectures which it is my duty to deliver in this place. I shall hope that such an investigation will prove, not, as Matthew Arnold once said, that "Poetry is the strongest part of our religion to-day," but that the English poets have been among the strongest witnesses to the faith of Christ in this land, and to that "truth and excellency of Christianity" which Mr. Hulse in his will stated to be the object which his lecturer should endeavour to demonstrate.

In the growth of English literature it is, of course, possible to trace a definite law of progress, and indeed to group its phenomena of intellectual ebb and flow into certain well-marked periods of special activity. The national sowing of great deeds is, as of necessity, followed by a national harvest of great thoughts. Each act, as it were, of the drama of England's life and story seems always to end in an epilogue of lyric song and praise, as the mental exaltation of the nation aroused by some great movement demands its adequate expression.

There are, it seems to me, four such representative periods in the national life, which we may conveniently take as the field of our present inquiry.

I.—First, then, there is the period, consequent upon the settlement, in the eighth and ninth centuries of the old English kingdoms, of that national seething time,

when the many and various elements, which were afterwards to make the mighty England of the generations yet to be, were still struggling under the inspiration of the working unity of the one English Church into the unity of the one English nation; and the monastic school of York, gathering in, on the one hand, the harvest of Irish learning, and, on the other, of the barbarised Latin culture of the Franco-Gallican monasteries, was gradually becoming the literary centre of Western Europe. Of this period I propose to take *Cynewulf* as the representative poet.

II.—Again, there is the period, at the close of the fourteenth century, when the two great principles upon which English society in the Middle Ages, Monasticism and Chivalry, had rested reached their grand climacteric, and sank into decay—when the scene of all those feelings which, since the time of King John, had been working in the conscience of the English people, found its most vivid poetic reflection in the "Vision of Piers Plowman," by *William Langland*.

III. Thirdly, there is the period, following upon the disruption in England of the great social fabric of Catholicism and of Feudalism, when in the sixteenth century, under the influence, on the one hand, of the New Learning, and, on the other, of the spiritual principle of equal freedom and individual liberty, the old traditional order gave place to that emancipation of faith and morals, which in the realm of letters we know by the magic name of the Renaissance, and in the realm of religion of the Reformation.

And of this period I dare hardly take as the representative poet of his age any other than he who is "not for an age, but for all time."

IV. Lastly, there is our own period, which in the early part of the last century witnessed the revival of Romanticism, both in letters and religion, and at a later date has endeavoured to co-ordinate in both spheres the latest revelations of philosophy and faith by the refocussing, on the one hand, of the old doctrine of the early Greek Christian Fathers, concerning the Immanence of the Divine in Man, which is the essential truth of the Incarnation; and, on the other, by the application of the modern scientific theory of evolution to all the great problems of human destiny and origin—a theory which alone appears to make possible to our modern age the thought of the Church of Christ as a sovereign society embracing in one comprehensive unity all realms of human thought or action.

And for this period the most representative poet—the poet of keenest spiritual insight, who shall best interpret for us in the light of modern knowledge the Person and the Spirit of Jesus Christ—I believe to be *Robert Browning*.

I begin, then, to-day with an early English monastic ideal, as set forth in "The Christ" of Cynewulf.

In the library of Exeter Cathedral there is an old book, or rather a roll of manuscript, known by the name of "The Exeter Book" (*Codex Exonensis*),[3] containing probably the noblest product of early English genius. The book has lain in the cathedral library ever

since the day when it was placed there, in the year 1071, by Leofric, the first Bishop of Exeter and tenth of Crediton, Chancellor of England, the friend and counsellor of Edward the Confessor. In Leofric's catalogue (prefixed to this MS.) of the books he placed in the library, the entry of this book, written in a contemporary Anglo-Saxon hand, runs thus: "A mickle English book on all sorts of things wrought in verse." The first place in the Codex is held by the remarkable poem—the oldest Christiad of modern Europe—Cynewulf's "Christ."

Of Cynewulf himself we know very little.[4] He is like the greatest of all our poets at least in this, that we know less of his life than of his character. From the fact that the scenery of his poems closely resembles the coast scenery of Northumbria — the storm-lashed cliffs, the wintry tempestuous seas, often weltering with ice—it has been conjectured that he belonged to one or other of the towns of that region—Whitby, Jarrow, Lindisfarne, Tynemouth — all centres of learning in touch with the great monastery school at York, and all places with which a poet would breathe that atmosphere of the sea which is so characteristic of all his poems. Other scholars, however, have conjectured, and the conjecture is not without some show of probability, that the poet may be identified with a certain Cynewulf, priest of Dunwich,[5] whose signature follows that of Bishop Tidfrith in the Canons of the Synod of Cloveshoo held in 803. Dunwich, as you remember, was that chief seaport on the East Anglian coast—now swallowed up by the ocean—which

in the middle of the seventh century had become the seat of Felix, the first East Anglian bishop. There, under the influence of Felix, a school of learning had sprung up, whose traditions, at any rate, were considered in the Middle Ages to be of sufficient importance to lend authority to the legendary stories of the ancient origin of this University, traditions which are still recognised, I believe, by the recital, in our Commemoration Service of Benefactors, of the name of Sigebert, King of the East Angles, and uncle of S. Etheldreda of Ely, as our first University founder.

But however that may be, whether the poet Cynewulf belonged to the Northern School of York, or to the East Anglian School of Dunwich, one thing is quite certain, that he must have had a scholastic training, for on no other hypothesis can we account for his familiarity with liturgical lore or for the ripeness of his scholarship, facts which are so prominent in his poetry. Obviously he was a zealous student of the Bible, and quite as obviously a student of the poetry or poetical prose of Augustine, of Prudentius, of Gregory the Great, of Bede, of Alcuin; and also of the Latin Creeds, Antiphons, and Hymns of the Church. So familiar indeed is he with the scholar's vernacular that Latin words slip, as it were, unobserved into his own English lines. That in mature life he became a priest seems fairly probable. That he was a monk also, and had therefore been trained as such, does not seem quite so likely. For he speaks of himself in early life as having received guerdon gold in the mead-hall, and a

richly caparisoned charger as the reward of prowess. This points at least to a youth of some adventure, and would explain also the exactitude of his knowledge concerning war and all its pomp and circumstance. But Cynewulf has not only the soldier's enthusiasm for warlike deeds. He speaks, too, with all a sailor's zest of the sea. No inland man could have written his poetry, or could so have sung as he did of the ocean, of its storm and calm, of its power and rage, of its waves dancing in the sunlight, of its multitudinous billows rolling into space under the moonbeams. In a word, he was a poet, with all a poet's imagination and close observation of what he saw and heard on sea and land; with all a poet's love of beauty—the beauty of the world, the splendour of art, the loveliness of woman, the glory of manhood; with all a poet's eye, too, for colour and with all a poet's passion for light. To him the earth is all dressed in green. "In guard of God stands the green plain decked with many streams and bright flowers." It is the white hands of Christ that are pierced with nails. The iron nails shine like stars or glitter like jewels. Christ Himself is "the sun burst" out of the East, flooding the world with day. His presence is always attested by glory of light. In his later poems, brooding, tender, poignant, vivid, in which he strives to disclose to us the kingdoms of life and death, to pierce the darkness of heathenism with the Christian's lyric joy, and to invest the lives of his hearers with the heaven which lies habitually about his own soul, there is still an echo of the careless heroic days of youth. But the higher moods of

his later life were not won without a period of storm and stress in which his early song-craft passes from him. There came a time—he tells us himself—when the careless happiness of youth found an abrupt end, like "the hasting waves, like the storm which ends in silence." He is in bitterest sorrow, convinced of sin, fearful of the wrath of God, so full of remorse for the careless past that his song-craft leaves him. He is no more a poet. Then he wins hope again with a vision of the redeeming power of the cross of Christ and the craft of song returns. "God Himself," he says, "unlocked the power of poetry in my breast." And all the old subjects live again in his pages—battle and voyage, mead-hall and race-course, jewels and fair women — but subordinated to his higher purpose, heightened and transfigured by the vision of the eternal behind the temporal. And so he sings of the "Dream of the Holy Rood," "Juliana," "Elene," "Andreas," "Guthlac," the "Fates of the Apostles," and "The Christ."

It is of this last poem especially that I wish to speak to you.

I confess that when I read it for the first time some years ago, in the full text published by Mr. Gollancz, I was astonished at the lofty sublimity and power of this great Christian epic of the Northern Church in the eighth century; this noble story of our salvation with its trumpet-tongued passages of joy and piety; its pathetic wailing lyrics of passionate prayer and supplication; its vivid dramatic pictures; its rushing choric outbursts of praise and victory.

The story is divided into three main pieces, dealing respectively with the Nativity of Christ, His Ascension, and the Doomsday.

I.

I have said that Cynewulf exhibits in his poetry very considerable familiarity with liturgical literature. This knowledge is very plainly shown in the first section of his "Christ." Its historic basis, indeed, is to be found in the public offices of the Church, as arranged for the Advent season, with their proper psalms, lessons, responds, hymns, and prayers, and especially upon the textual structure of the pre-Christmas antiphons—"the seven greater O's" as they have been called—those solemn invocations to the Advent Christ, addressed under one or other of His scriptural titles: (i.) O Sapientia! (ii.) O Adonaï! (iii.) O Radix Jesse! (iv.) O Clavis David! (v.) O Oriens! (vi.) O Rex Gentium! (vii.) O Emmanuel! which were sung in the churches day by day at vespers in the week preceding Christmas.[6] There can be little doubt indeed to any careful student of this first *passus* of Cynewulf's poem, that its writer, thrilled by the solemn chanting of these Latin antiphons and inspired by the devout spirit of their contents, desires to reproduce them in English. He abridges, expands, suppresses, transposes, interpolates, just as his genius may dictate, but the liturgical basis is never forgotten. The great Advent message of the Church is clearly told. The story alternates between joy and exultation over the fulness of Christ's manifestation, and intense longing that, as the great Redeemer, He

will liberate the sinner from the thraldom of his sin, and as the Prince of Glory He will build up His Church in the most Holy Faith.

The poem opens with an invocation to Christ—a variation of the Antiphon "O Rex Gentium"—"O King and desire of all nations, Thou chief corner-stone who makest two to be one; come Thou and save man whom Thou formedst from the clay!"[7] It is thus Englished by Cynewulf:—

"O King! Thou art the wall-stone,
which of old the workman
from their work rejected!
Well it Thee beseemeth
that Thou hold the headship
of this Hall of glory,
and should'st join together
With a fastening firm
the broad-spaced walls
of the flint unbreakable
all fitly framed together;
that among earth's dwellers
all with sight of eyes
may for ever wonder;
O Prince of glory!
now through skill and wisdom
manifest Thy handiwork,
true-fast, and firm-set
In sovran splendour."

Then follows a paraphrase of the Antiphon "O clavis David!" a prayer to the Christ as the Maker and Craftsman of the world, who holds the keys of Life and Death, to have pity upon His people and to save

them from the Baleful one, the slayer of the mind, the Scather of Men. "We speak these words in very need"—cries the poet in his own person—"we who in prison yearn for the sunlight, who in abject plight must needs depart to this narrow shore bereft of Fatherland."

Then there follows what we may well call a dramatic dialogue[8]—the first dawning so to say in our literature of the Mystery Play and the sequent English drama—in which the characters Mary the Virgin, and Joseph with the children of Jerusalem as chorus, placed in a scenic environment prepared for their entrance, sing to one another of the Incarnation of Christ and its meaning.

> "Hail! from the sovran splendour—glory Thou of women,
> Loveliest of maidens—in all the realms of earth,
> That the ocean Rovers—ever hearkened speech of—
> Tell to us the mystery—that came to thee from heaven."

And the Virgin answers—

> "What is now the wonder—at the which ye gaze
> Making here your moan—mournfully awailing
> Children ye of Salem—daughters too of Solima
> Verily to men-ward—the mystery is not known
> But gone is the guilt of Eve—passed the curse of Adam
> Praise to lowliest woman—hope is won for man
> And joy for the host of angels—and for the Father of Truth
> for ever."

Then the chorus seems to break into the dialogue with a variant of the antiphon, *O oriens splendor lucis*, a little lyric which is probably one of the earliest of English Christmas carols—

"Hail Earendel—soothfast and sunbright
Sunbeam enlightening—all the tides of time
Come Thyself illumine—souls long lost in darkness
Come Thou Lord of Triumph—Thou Giver of Thyself!" [9]

Then once more the dialogue of Mary and Joseph proceeds, celebrating the Virgin's praise as "the glorious Lady of the middle earth, and the ring-adorned Bride of Heaven," ending with a final chorus in which are pictured the circle of the praising Seraphim, "with winged plumes flashing in the play of their flight," around the throne of the Eternal.

I think perhaps one ought to notice here in passing how in this canto the somewhat sombre and grim aspect of the Gospel, as Cynewulf conceives it, is brightened with the idyllic beauty of the Virgin Mother of the Christ, and through her of that conception of womanhood—an ideal, it should be remembered, worthy of an English poet picturing a woman of the true northern type, generous and gentle and winning, but firm of character, resolute of will, royal of bearing—a conception which, whatever may be the mistakes and heresies of a later Mariolatry, did so much to soften and refine the heroic ideals of our early forbears—

"For in reverence of the Heavenes Queen
They came to worship alle women that been."

Indeed, I think, it is not too much to say that the sweet and tender grace, the humility and loving-kindness of the Virgin, her maidenhood, her motherhood, as pictured in this poem of Cynewulf's, and in the pages of many another English poet down to Chaucer, became for the

men of mediæval England the most vivid and beautiful Christian ideal that filled the minds of men after the image of Christ.[10]

II.

The second portion of Cynewulf's poem is taken up with the subject of Christ's Ascension, and of the events which followed and preceded it. I have said that the source of the first part was found by Cynewulf in the great pre-Christmas antiphons. So also we shall find that the historic basis of this second part is more or less liturgical; for it is founded on the close of a homily written by Gregory the Great[11] on one of the special lessons of Ascension-tide (that which was read on the third Nocturne of the Octave), and upon a Latin Antiphon (*Hymnum Cantamus Gloriæ*) written by the Venerable Bede, and still in part familiar to the Church of to-day as the hymn "Sing triumphant hymns of praise." The substance therefore of Cynewulf's poem is thus associated with two of the glories of the early English Church. For as the heroic age of that Church may fitly be said to close with the death of Bede, it is surely interesting to find that the Ascension Hymn, which, according to the touching story of Cuthbert, was among the last words on the lips of his dying master, was also enshrined at the very heart of Cynewulf's great epic. And when we remember too how great was the debt of the English Church to Pope Gregory, it is hardly, I think, less interesting to note that the most important part of Cynewulf's "Christ" should consist of a poetic

amplification of one of the most eloquent homilies of that great Doctor of the Church.

But the fact that the Ascended Christ, the King of Glory, victorious over sin and death, rather than the Crucified Sufferer shines forth as the chief Figure of this eighth-century poem—whether suggested to Cynewulf primarily by Gregory's homily or not I cannot say—has, I think, a far wider interest than its mere historic association with the Ascension-tide offices. For although it cannot be doubted, I suppose, that the harmony of the Christian Creed depends upon the fact of the Ascension of Jesus even as much as upon the fact of the Resurrection itself—for it should not be forgotten that the circumstances of the Ascension, in their brightness, in their promise, in their miraculousness, in their moving appeal to human aspiration seems especially to attract the contemplation of all who receive the Christian Faith—still it cannot, I think, be denied—it is a mournful fact of history—that the morbid temper of the Church of the Middle Ages could not rest satisfied without perpetual representation of the tortures of the Crucified Christ, and did but very rarely dwell upon the glories of His triumph.

It is, therefore, all the more remarkable to find, on the evidence of this representative poet, that in regard to the due proportion of faith, and especially in relation to this great doctrine of the triumphant Christ, our English forbears in the Church of the eighth century had the root of the matter in them a thousand years ago. For it is this faith in a Christ, who by His incarnation consecrated and ennobled human nature, and

who by His Ascension with that spiritualised human nature into heaven, glorified, may I not say, deified it—"He was made man that we might be made God"[12] are the bold words of Athanasius—and who by His Holy Spirit "gave gifts unto men" for the strengthening and emboldening of His Church, it is this faith which has been the effective antecedent of those historic changes which have modified, if they have not created, our modern civilisation.

It is, I say, therefore, specially interesting to find that the Personality of Christ, in Cynewulf's poem, is undoubtedly pictured as a Divine and Imperial Figure, supreme over heaven and earth, the Lord of Glory and the everlasting Son of the Father, the Judge of quick and dead, even though we are also obliged to allow that the old Saxon poet has conceived Him, in somewhat saga fashion, as a victorious King, whose apostles and saints are thegns and æthelings, dispensing gifts of service among His thralls, waging a world-wide war in which earth and heaven and hell are mingled, and who, when the victory over the dark-burg of hell shall be won, will sit down to feast with His warriors in the great Hall of the light-burg of heaven, amid the singing of the angels, who are the bards of the battle.[13]

> "When the great Leader, the Prince majestic,
> Called to Bethany his band of thanes
> His dear comrades"—

are the words with which Cynewulf prefaces the scriptural account of the farewell words of the ascending Christ to His disciples. So too the great commission

to His Church, "Go ye into all nations, teach, preach, baptize," becomes such an exhortation as would no doubt be natural to a poet whose people were still half-pagan and idolatrous: "Break, break the idols, cast them down, spurn them; quench strife and hatred; sow peace on earth. I will abide with you for ever." [14]

"Lo! the Holy Hero!" he exclaims, as in his vision he sees the mighty host of the angels coming to meet in mid-space the ascending Christ, and the warrior spirit once more awakens in him, and he bursts into a war-shout, like a chieftain welcoming his over-lord:—

"Lo, the Holy Hero—warrior King of glory,
He the Helm of Heaven, hath arrayed the war
Right against his ancient foes, with his only might.
. . . . . .
Now will he seek the spirit's throne of grace,
He, the Saviour of souls, the proper bairn of God,
After his war-play! Forward now, ye comrades,
Frankly march along! Open, O ye gates!
He will into you. He, of all the wielder,
He, the City's King—He Creation's Lord,
Now his folk will lead, reft from the devils,
To the joy of joys, by His own victory.
'Twixt God and man he places a ghostly pledge
Of love—Life's solace, and of all Light joy." [563–584.] [15]

III.

The third and final portion of Cynewulf's poem is taken up with a description, in swirling verses, full of imaginative splendour, of the Day of Judgment. Like a thief in the blackness of night it surprises men.

"Lo, the fire-blast, flaming far, fierce and hungry as a sword,
Whelms the world withal. Then on every wight

> Fastens the death-flame! on all fowls and beasts,
> Fire-swart or raging warrior, rushes conflagration
> All the earth along." [16]

For the general organism of this part of his poem, Cynewulf is indebted to various sources — to Bede, to Gregory, to Augustine, to Prudentius, to Ephraem Syrus, to the Apocrypha—but the whole is moulded or rather fused by his imaginative power into a poem of the greatest moral fervour, intensity, and vividness. The scenes described are realised with startling clearness. The speeches are majestic and yet tender, pathetic and yet awful.

The final address of Christ to the good and evil, to the just and the unjust, repeating the whole story of the Fall, the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, is full of quick personal appeals, as if Jesus were speaking to one only out of the vast host gathered to judgment.

There is one specially effective passage on the theme of the Holy Rood. It is a variant on the story of the vision of Constantine, as told by Eusebius, a story which we know to have been familiar to Cynewulf by his direct allusion to it in the "Elene." [17]

A mighty blood-red cross is pictured with its foot standing on the Hill of Zion, rising till its top reaches the sky. All the hosts of heaven, angels and men, gaze upon it. By its ruddy light all things are seen. The sun is gone. It shines instead of the sun. It is the brightest of all beacons. All the shadows are scattered by its brilliancy. From head to foot it is red, wet with the blood of the King of Heaven.

The good see it and it brings brightness to their souls. The evil see it for their torment and their doom. And in the ruddy light, Christ, like a Roman preacher to the crucifix, turns to the mighty Rood, points to Himself hanging there, and, "speaking as if He spake to one and yet did mean all sinful folk," exclaims:—

"Lo, man, with my own hands I fashioned thee
In the beginning, and wisdom granted thee;
I formed thy limbs of clay; I gave thee living soul;
I honoured thee o'er all created things; I wrought
Thine aspect like to mine; I gave thee might,
And wealth o'er each wide land; of woe thou knewest nought,
Nought of the woe to come; yet thankless thou . . .
Thou wouldst not fulfil the Word of Life
But, at the word of thy Bane, didst break my bidding,
A treacherous foe, a mischievous destroyer,
Didst thou obey rather than thy Creator. . . .

. . . . . .

See now the deadly wounds they made of yore
Upon my hands and e'en upon my feet . . .
The gory wound, the gash upon my side . . .
O how uneven between us two the reckoning!

. . . . . .

Wherefore didst thou forsake the beauteous life
Which graciously I bought for thee through love.

. . . . . .

Give me back my life for which in martyrdom
I gave thee my own. For that sore death of mine
I claim the life thou hast so sinfully destroyed.

. . . . . .

Why hast thou crucified me afresh on thy hand's cross
Worse than when of old I hung upon the tree?

. . . Methinks this is harder,
Thy sin's cross is heavier for me bound fast unwillingly,
Than was that other rood which once willingly
I for thee ascended." [18]

And so Cynewulf's poem ends with the final locking of hell and the opening of heaven to the just, and with this description of the Perfect Land :—

"There is angels' song bliss of the blessed,
There is the dear face of the Lord Eternal
To the blessed brighter than all the sun's beaming.
There is love of the loved ones, life without death's end;
Merry man's multitude, youth without age,
Glory of God's chivalry, health without pain,
Rest for right doers, rest without toil,
Day without darkness, bliss without bale,
Peace between friends, peace without jealousy,
Love that envieth not, in the union of the saints,
For the blessed in Heaven, nor hunger nor thirst,
Nor sleep, nor sickness, nor sun's heat,
Nor cold, nor care, but the happy company.
Fairest of all hosts shall ever enjoy
Their sovran's grace and glory with their King."

Such, then, in briefest analysis is the outline of Cynewulf's poem. What, then, shall we say of it? How especially does it seem to us—for in conclusion I must return to the question with which I set out—that the Personality of the Christ is conceived by this singer and poet of our Northern Church in the England of a thousand years ago?

Of the poem as a whole I think we may say this, that although in its structure we cannot deny that the old is still somewhat interwoven with the new, the old

romantic and mythical elements of Celtic or Teutonic origin tending somewhat to paganise the purity of Christian faith, still Cynewulf's song is a trumpet voice of the heart which belongs essentially to our English nature. In grasp, in variety, in narrative skill, Cynewulf, it is true, is hopelessly inferior to Dante or Milton; yet, in vividness, in poignancy, in hope, in love, in tenderness, he belongs to the same order as they, and in his sense of the sublime, as in that picture of the cross towering to the heavens like a mythic Yggdrasil, he needs not shrink from a comparison with even the prophets of the sublime. Indeed, I think it is not too much to say, in the words of one of his latest commentators, that "the lofty music of Milton's 'mighty mouthed harmonies,' and not less perhaps Milton's sombre Puritan faith and its somewhat lurid conceptions of the future of the unsaved, come down to him in legitimate descent from this earliest exaltation of English Psalm."

In the theology of his poem Cynewulf is quite evidently an orthodox believer after the standard of the Western Church of his time, in substantial agreement with Pope Gregory, the father of Latin Christianity in England. "Not only does he frequently extol the Trinity, but he specifies the Three Persons, even explicitly identifying the Father with the Son and with the Spirit. The Father is thought of especially as the Creator, though this function is sometimes attributed to the Son, and sometimes exercised by Him in conjunction with the Father. Christ, though God's Son, and con-

ceived by the Holy Ghost, is God of God, without beginning, co-eternal and co-abiding with the Father, and eternally generated by Him. He is called Emmanuel, and designated a priest after the order of Melchizedec. Of His life on earth, we have mention of His birth, His miracles, His trial and crucifixion, the harrowing of hell, the Resurrection and Ascension. He sitteth at the right hand of the Father, throned among the angels, and thence shall come in glory to judge the world."

And it is this last clause of the Christian Creed—this faith in the ascended Christ victorious over sin and death and hell—which gives, I think, the distinctive note to Cynewulf's poem, as indeed it probably does also to Anglo-Saxon Christianity. Personal sorrow for sin, the rapture wrought by the conviction of redemption through Christ's cross, this of course finds lyric expression in Anglo-Saxon poetry. For the personal cry after all is the human basis of poetry as it is of prayer. But the final overthrow of evil, the final victory of good, this also finds triumphant, exultant expression. For an optimistic faith in the highest forces which govern human destiny as beneficent and progressive, is the truest inspiration of poetry as it is of worship. And although it is true that the glory of Christ's conquest is, as I said, conceived by Cynewulf in somewhat Saga fashion, and the story of the harrowing of hell and the victor's return in triumph to His heavenly home is depicted in images largely borrowed from the war legends of our heathen forefathers, yet it is this conception of Christ as a victor crowned and triumphant, with the signs of the Passion accomplished and fulfilled kept in the background, which

touched the imagination of our forefathers as nothing else perhaps could, and gave indeed a distinctively national note of joy to their Christianity and to the development of English worship. It was this conception also of the ascended Christ, co-equal with the Father, the glorified Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God, the eternal sanction, be it remembered, of the dignity of human nature, and of the principle of human freedom in every form, natural as well as individual, which gave to the great monastic leaders, and indeed to all the best Church teachers of the Middle Age, their power to make the Church of Christ the school and nurse of patriots, the guide, the educator, the protector of the woman, the child, the slave against the tyranny of their lords, the guardian of ancient liberties, the inspirer of those newer democratic virtues of loyalty and brotherhood, which have formed the basis of all that is most stable in the social order of the present.[19]

And to-day do we not need to emphasise the same conception?

Is it not true that the conquering spirit of life, an optimistic faith in human nature as it exists in the thought of God; faith in man as he ought to be and will be; faith in God as the Father of man; faith in man as the Son of God; faith that the outcome of the evolution of all things will be found to be good; faith that good will ultimately prevail over evil; faith that sin itself will ultimately be seen to have been subordinated to the purpose of a higher righteousness than could have been attained if man had never sinned; that faith in all

this—is it not true?—is indissolubly bound up with our belief that Christ has ascended up on high, and has sat down at the right hand of God?

"The right hand of God!" But where is that?

"Dextra Dei est ubique!"

The old Christian Father spoke true. The right hand of God is everywhere. The kingdom of Christ is an eternal kingdom.

I have read somewhere in a book of Eastern travels that among the Mussulmans of Damascus there is a tradition that as the Ascension of Jesus into heaven took place on the Mount of Olives at Jerusalem, so His Descent at the last day to judge the world will be on the Mountain of Figs at Damascus. In honour of the legend one of the minarets of the Great Mosque there is called the Minaret of Isa—the Tower of Jesus. And as every prayer offered within those walls is thought by the Mohammedans to be sure of answer, for many a long year they have rigidly excluded every Christian believer from the mosque. But the mosque was once a Christian church—one of the earliest of Christian churches. And above the great entrance gate the followers of Christ who to-day may not cross its threshold may still read the words inscribed there in imperishable mosaic by its Christian builders in the fourth century. They are the words of the 145th Psalm, with the addition of but one word, that of the Holy Name:—

"Ἡ βασιλεία σου, χριστέ, βασιλεία πάντων τῶν αἰώνων."
"Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom."

And that is still the song of praise and triumph which the Church of the imperial Christ demands from each one of us to-day. "Thy kingdom, O Jesus, is a kingdom for all the ages." We stand, you and I, not outside the gate only, I trust, offering a mere nominal reverence, a mere conventional worship to the Holy Name: we are privileged to enter within the courts of prayer and praise, to join in adoration of the incarnate and ascended Lord, whose kingdom is a kingdom for all the ages! "Regnum tuum, Domine, regnum omnium seculorum; et dominatio tua in omni generatione et generationem." Through all the ages and through all the realms Christ claims to be supreme. "All things that the Father hath are His." All things—there is no limitation: all history, all science, all poetry, all art, all music, all politics, all philosophy, all truth, in whatever realm of human thought or action it may be. The Christ of Christ's own teaching is a wider Christ than the Christ of our imagining. He still "giveth gifts unto men"—apostles, prophets, saints, evangelists, teachers, poets. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." He spake by the prophets of old: He speaks by the prophets now: David and Isaiah and Job, Pythagoras and Plato, Virgil and Augustine, Gregory and Hildebrand and Bernard, Bede and Caedmon and Cynewulf, Langland and Chaucer and Shakespeare, Dante and Raphael and Michael Angelo, Wycliff and Erasmus and Luther, Descartes and Newton and Darwin, Wordsworth and Emerson and Browning, Newman and Pusey and Maurice — all heaven and earth are

vocal with this imperious song of praise: "Give unto the Christ, O ye sons of the mighty, Give unto the Christ glory and strength. Worship the Christ in the beauty of holiness! Worship God, for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS TO LECTURE I

Note 1, p. 3.

"Poets, according to the circumstances of the age and nation in which they appeared, were called, in the earlier epochs of the world, legislators or prophets: a poet essentially comprises and unites both these characters. For he not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and fruit of latest time. Not that I assert poets to be prophets in the gross sense of the word, or that they can foretell the form as surely as they foreknow the spirit of events: such is the pretence of superstition, which would make poetry an attribute of prophecy, rather than prophecy an attribute of poetry" (Shelley's "A Defence of Poetry").

Note 2, p. 7.

"A figure not unlike the Good Shepherd had from time to time appeared in the Grecian worship. This was the Hermes Kriophorus—Mercury with the Ram—as described by Pausanius. There were also the figures of dancing shepherds in the tombs of the Nasones near Rome. In one instance in the Christian Catacombs the Good Shepherd appears surrounded by the Three Graces. In the tomb of Galla Placidia, He might well be the youthful Apollo playing with his pipes to the flock of Admetus. There had not yet sprung up the fear of taking as the chief symbol of Christianity an idea or a figure which would be

equally acknowledged by Pagans. It represents to us the joyful, cheerful side of Christianity. Look at that beautiful, graceful figure, bounding down as if from his native hills, with the happy sheep nestling on his shoulder, with the pastoral pipes in his hand, blooming in immortal youth. It is the exact representation of the Italian shepherd as we constantly encounter him on the Sabine hills at this day, holding the stray lamb on his shoulders, with a strong hand grasping the twisted legs as they hang on his breast. Just such a one appears on a fresco in the so-called house of Livia on the Palatine. That is the primitive conception of the Founder of Christianity. . . . The popular conception of Him in the early Church was of the strong, the joyous youth, of eternal growth, of immortal grace." (From the chapter on "The Roman Catacombs," in Dean Stanley's "Christian Institutions," p. 256.)

In some of the early frescoes of the Good Shepherd this joyous conception of the Christ is emphasised by representing the foundling on His shoulder not as a lamb of the sheep, but as a kid of the goats. It was this representation which provoked that indignant un-Christian protest of Tertullian, which Matthew Arnold has enshrined in one of his most touching sonnets.

"'*He saves the sheep, the goats He doth not save.*'
So rang Tertullian's sentence, on the side
Of that unpitying Phrygian sect which cried:
'Him can no fount of fresh forgiveness lave,
Who sins, once wash'd by the baptismal wave.'
So spake the fierce Tertullian. But she sigh'd—
The infant Church! of love she felt the tide
Stream on her from her Lord's yet recent grave.
And then she smiled: and in the Catacombs,
With eye suffused, but heart inspired true,
On those walls subterranean, where she hid
Her head, 'mid ignominy, death, and tombs,
She her Good Shepherd's hasty image drew—
And on His shoulder, not a lamb, a kid."

Cf. also on this aspect of the Christ, Keim, "Geschichte Jesu von Nazara," i. 458, and Zangwill's "Dreamers of the Ghetto," p. 480: "I give the Jews a Christ they can now accept, the Christians a Christ they have forgotten. Christ, not the tortured God, but the joyous comrade, the friend of all simple souls. . . . Not the theologian spinning barren subtleties, but the man of genius protesting against all forms and dogmas that would replace the divine vision and the living ecstasy . . . the lover of warm life and warm sunlight, and all that is fresh and simple, and pure and beautiful." But this Hellenic quality, so to say, in the character of Jesus must not of course be emphasised out of due proportion. Even Harnack ("What is Christianity?" edn. Saunders, 1901, p. 33) warns us that "the picture of Jesus' life and His discourses stand in no relation with the Greek spirit; . . . that He was even in touch with the thoughts of Plato or the Porch . . . it is absolutely impossible to maintain." The balance, however, between the Hellenic quality of joy in life and the Hebrew quality of asceticism, as exhibited in the character of Jesus, is well kept in a remarkable article by Professor Peabody of Harvard in the *Hibbert Journal*, July 1903. "The asceticism of Jesus, however un-Hellenic it may be, and His delight in life, however un-Messianic it may be, are obviously not ends in His teaching, but incidents along the way. They are by-products thrown off in the development of His career. . . . The ethics of Jesus are not those of a mediæval saint or of a Galilean peasant, but of a teacher whose pains and pleasures are but the scenery and environment of the soul. . . . His ministry was first of all dynamic, commanding, authoritative. When He announced the principles of His teaching, the impression first made upon its hearers was, we are told, not so much of the message itself as of the messenger. . . . The preacher did not demonstrate, or plead, or threaten like the scribes: He swayed the multitude by personal power. It was the same throughout His ministry. He called men from their boats, their tax-booths, their homes, and they looked up into His face and

obeyed. He commands the instinct of the soldier who gives orders to those below him because he has received orders from above. What is the note of character which is touched in such incidents as these? It is the note of strength. This is no ascetic, abandoning the world; no dreamer; no joyous comrade, delighting in the world: here is the quiet consciousness of mastery, the authority of the leader: a confidence which makes Him able to declare that a life built on His sayings is built on a rock. Jesus is no gentle visionary, no Lamb of God except in the experience of suffering: He is a Person whose dominating trait is force: the scourger of the traders, the defier of the Pharisees, the commanding Personality whose words are with the authority of power."

Note 3, p. 11.

The manuscript of the "Exeter Codex" is 5½ inches in height and 7½ inches in breadth. It is written on vellum, apparently by a single hand of the early eleventh century. Scholars were first indebted for their knowledge of the existence of the MS. to Wanley, who gave an imperfect account of it in his Catalogue of Anglo-Saxon MSS. It was not, however, until the year 1826 that the fact of its existence became gradually known, through the analysis given of it by the Rev. W. D. Conybeare, in the "Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry" compiled in 1826 by his brother, Rev. J. J. Conybeare. A copy of the MS. made by Robert Chambers in 1831 now constitutes Additional MS. 9067 of the British Museum. A complete edition of the MS. with a translation was published in 1842 by Benjamin Thorpe. A new edition of Thorpe's work is announced as shortly to appear (in the Early English Text Society publications) by Mr. I. Gollancz, who had already in 1892 published an excellent translation with notes. The most complete edition known of "The Christ" is that by Professor Cook of Yale, published by the Boston Athenæum Press in 1900. In that work we have

an old English classic edited with all the care and ability which is given by the best scholars to an edition of a Greek or Roman masterpiece. Professor Cook, in speaking of the date ascribed to the MS., considers that "it is not unlikely that it may have been executed and carefully revised under Leofric's own directions, in which case we are tempted to assume that the selection and compilation of the poems was also due to the good bishop. It is clear that he was a man of taste as well as of judgment, a lover of art as well as an excellent administrator. At present 'The Christ' is the longest and most important poem in the collection, being at least one-fifth longer than the 'Guthlac,' and nearly two and a half times as long as the 'Phœnix' or the 'Juliana.' If the book were put together by a man as judicious, learned, and artistic as Leofric, it would seem fitting that he should begin it with a poem of such great beauty and significance." Of the dialect in which the "Exeter Codex" is written, Mr. Gollancz says (p. xxi., "The Christ"): "It is West Saxon, but one is able to detect in a number of poems the fossil remains of another and an older dialect. Minute philological criteria lead to the conclusion, supported strongly by other evidence, that the first of the poems preserved in the Codex, and many more besides, are Saxon (*i.e.* Southern) transcriptions of Anglian (*i.e.* Northern) originals. Wessex merely preserves the poems, Northumbria produces them. Indeed, at no time in its history has Wessex been productive of poetical work: from the days of Alfred onwards its special strength lay in prose literature. Did not Chaucer recognise the fact when he made his parson exclaim—

> "'Trusteth wel, I am a Sotherne man,
> I cannot geste, rom, ram, ruf, by my letter,
> And God wote, rime holde I but litel better,
> And therefore if you list I wol not glose,
> I wol you tell a litel tale in prose.'

It seems almost certain, then, that 'The Christ' is an Anglian poem written before Northumbria ceased to be the great centre

of poetical activity, *i.e.* before the beginning or the ninth century."

NOTE 4, p. 12.

In 1840 J. M. Kemble in England (*Archæologia*, xxviii. 360–62) and Jacob Grimm in Germany (*Andreas und Elene*, ed. Grimm, Cassel) independently discovered that the runic letters interwoven with the text of "Christ" and "Juliana," two of the Exeter pieces, and "Elene," one of the Vercelli, formed in each case the name of the author CYNEWULF. For a full discussion of this runic device *cf.* Professor Cook's ed. of "The Christ," pp. 151–63, and Gollancz, "Christ," excursus on the Cynewulf runes, pp. 173–84. The following is the runic passage from "The Christ," lines 796–806 in the original, with the runes printed in Roman capitals, with the English translation :—

"ᚦonne · C · cwacad gehyred cyning mædlan
rodera ryhtend sᚦrecan reᚹe word
ᚦam ᚦe him cer in worulde wace hyrdon
ᚦendan · Y · and · N · ypast meahtan
frofre findan · ᚦær sceal forht monig
on ᚦam wong-steda werig bidan
hwæt him æfter dædum deman wille
wraᚦra wita. Biᚦ se · W · scæcen
eorᚦan frætwa · U · was longe
· L · flodum bilocen lif-wynna dæl
· F · on foldan ᚦonne frætwe sculon
byrnan on bæle."

Translation.

C · Then the *keen* shall quake: he shall hear the Lord,
The Heaven's ruler, utter words of wrath
To those who in the world obeyed Him ill,
While they might solace find more easily
Y · N · for their *Yearning* and their *Need*; Many afeard

shall wearily await upon that plain
what penalty he will adjudge to them
W · for their deeds. The *Winsomeness* of earthly gauds
U · Shall then be changed. In days of yore *Unknown*
L · *Lake-floods* embraced the region of life's joy
F · and all earth's *Fortune*.

It must be remembered, of course, that in the original MS. the letters C · Y · N · E · W · U · L · F were printed in the runic character to attract the eye to the device. But as each runic character also represents a word as well as a letter, in reading the poem the equivalent word was substituted to give the sense much as in the above English translation.

Note 5, p. 12.

There has been much discussion among scholars as to whether Cynewulf was a native of Wessex or of Northumbria. The "Exeter Codex," as we have said, is the dialect of Wessex (the literary dialect), but to claim a Wessex origin of Cynewulf on this ground would be to prove too much, for it would prove that all Anglo-Saxon poems are also West Saxon, for they are all in that dialect. Professor Cook ("Christ," p. lxxi.) has thus tabulated the authorities on either side of the debate: "Upon this point we are restricted to inference. Grimm seems to intimate that he considers Cynewulf to have been a West Saxon. He was at first followed by Dietrich, and the same opinion was also held by Th. Müller. Leo was the first to assume that he was a Northumbrian, though on grounds that were largely untenable. Not till 1875 did Dietrich change his opinion, and concede that Cynewulf was a Northumbrian. Rieger assented to this, as did Grein and Ten Brink. Müller, who at first regarded Cynewulf as a West Saxon, in 1895 endeavoured to prove that he was a Mercian. Sievers, in his articles on rhyme and metre, brought forward new arguments to show that the poet was a Northumbrian. Ramhorst and Leiding were of the same opinion."

In confirmation of the Northumbrian origin of Cynewulf, Mr. Stopford Brooke has the following interesting suggestions to make: "If Cynewulf wrote the 'Riddles' (in the Exeter book) —and far the greater number of critics think that he did—he was well acquainted with a storm-lashed coast bordered with cliffs; with the life and business of sailors in their ships, and that the seas which he knew were not only tempestuous, but frequently weltering with ice. . . . 'The Christ' also is full of sea allusions; the cliff barriers between sea and land is once, at least, vigorously seen, and the famous passage (line 848) is written by one who had been a sailor, who knew the pains and longings of a seaman's life, and who spoke to men who, being themselves seamen, would understand him. It is not a passage which a poet writing in Mercia or Wessex was likely to have written. . . . No inland man, no Mercian, is likely to have written the voyage of 'Andreas.' Moreover, I do not know of any place on the coast of Wessex where a sea-poet was likely to write. Many such places did exist on the coast of Northumbria —Whitby, Hartlepool, Jarrow, Tynemouth, Lindisfarne, Coldingham—all centres of learning and all in constant sea communication. . . . An 'atmosphere' is perhaps poor evidence, but it is of value when it goes with other probabilities. Moreover, it is not such weak evidence as it seems. One might say, for example, that Tennyson could never have lived on the northern coast. His atmosphere is of the gentler lands and coasts below the Humber; and I can no more conceive the 'Elene' and the 'Riddles,' 'Guthlac,' and the 'Andreas' being written on the southern coast or inland, than I can conceive 'Maud' being written at Bamborough or Whitby" (Brooke, "Early English Literature," vol. ii. pp. 193–4). To his "sea atmosphere" argument Mr. Brooke adds two other suggestions in support of the Northumbrian origin of Cynewulf. First, there was no school of native poetry in either Mercia or Wessex, as for a century there had been in the North; and second, the historical conditions of Northumbria were in exactly that state which

would be likely to produce the half-sad, half-despairing note of Cynewulf, who finds all his joy, not on the earth, but in the world to come.

Professor Cook, on the other hand, although he would reject a Wessex origin for Cynewulf as emphatically as Mr. Brooke, makes the suggestion, which I have given in the text of my lecture, namely, that Cynewulf was an East Anglian rather than a Northumbrian, identifying the poet with a certain Cynulf, who was present at the Synod of Clovesho in 803, a priest of the diocese of Dunwich, in the train of Bishop Tidfrith. Briefly stated, Professor Cook's arguments for this contention are these :—

1. The date agrees with what we should expect.

2. The form of the name is such as the poet was using at this time.

3. Cynewulf was almost certainly an ecclesiastic : if not a monk, then a priest, or perhaps both.

4. Dunwich was the seat of a school established by its first bishop, Felix, from which school, in later times, the University of Cambridge was asserted to have sprung : so that the traditions of learning may well have persisted there.

5. Through Æthelheard, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Tidfrith, his own bishop, Cynewulf could have kept in touch with Alcuin, from whom he derived his notions of the fire of Doomsday. About the time of the Council of Clovesho, Tidfrith received a letter of advice from Alcuin. Possibly Tidfrith, Æthelheard, or more likely Alcuin, may have been "the eminent man" whom Cynewulf apostrophises at the beginning of Part II. of "The Christ."

6. At Dunwich, in early days, the chief seaport on the East Anglian coast, Cynewulf would have ample opportunities to become acquainted with the sea, and even with the storm-lashed cliffs of Whitby and the North.

"Objections," concludes Professor Cook, "may no doubt be brought against this theory, but to me there seems nothing

intrinsically improbable in it. If it be urged that we know nothing about the dialect of East Anglia, one might reply that at all events it was Anglian : if that the Dunwich School may by this time have become extinct, it is yet possible, nay, very likely, that Cynewulf may have attended the still more famous one at York, and by no means certain that he was not a Northumbrian or Mercian by birth. If the influence of Offa was sufficient to raise the Mercian Æthelheard to the See of Canterbury, it was sufficient to induct a priest from another province into his East Anglian office. It is thus possible that the Court which Cynewulf knew was the Court of Offa, and that it was there that he received the "appled gold" mentioned in the *Elene*.

"The poem is truly original and originally conceived. It is the history, I might say the epic, of salvation. . . . It is a series of hymns, at least at the beginning, closed by choice outbursts of praise. I fancy, however—for the third part is much more continuously wrought than the first or second—that when the poet had written a number of these short pieces, a larger aim dawned on him, and then fully rose in his mind : and that then he determined to work his three subjects into a connected whole. If he went back for this purpose to his earlier labours he did not fulfil his purpose well. The bringing together of the first part is not successful. The different pieces remain separate lays. In the second part the two subjects—the Ascension itself, and the ascension with Christ of the souls delivered from Hades into Heaven—might easily have been made into a continuous narrative if Cynewulf had thought of weaving them into one piece when he began. . . . Nevertheless, of all Cynewulf's poems, 'The Christ' is the weightiest, because in it he has made his greatest struggle towards an artistic unity, and has best shown in a sustained effort his constructive power. It is, moreover, essentially the work of a poet, though of a poet untrained in composition. The rushing outbursts of praise—the lyrics of the work—are

poetry of a higher fervour than anything in the Caedmonic verse. In these he reaches his nearest approach to a fine style; and, as always with a poet, his style is a revelation of his character. We seem to feel the man himself when in the contrast so natural to an artist this trumpet-tongued piety and joy is succeeded by personal passages full of pathetic regret, repentance, and humility. In praise and prayer, in mournfulness and exaltation, he was equally passionate." (Stopford Brooke, "Early English Literature," vol. ii. p. 218–19.)

Note 6, p. 16.

"The Church enters to-day (Dec. 17) on the seven days which precede the vigil of Christmas, and which are known in the Liturgy under the name of the Greater Ferias. The ordinary of the advent office becomes more solemn; the antiphons of the Psalms, both for Lauds and the Hours of the day, are proper and allude expressly to the Great Coming. Every day at vespers is sung a solemn antiphon, which consists of a fervent Prayer to the Messiah, whom it addresses by one of the titles given Him by the sacred Scriptures. . . . The canonical Hour of Vespers has been selected as the most appropriate time for this solemn supplication to our Saviour, because, as the Church sings in one of her hymns, it was in the evening of the world (*vergente mundi vespere*) that the Messiah came among us. Then antiphons are sung at the *Magnificat* to show us that the Saviour whom we expect is to come to us by Mary. They are sung twice—once before and once after the Canticle" (Gueranger, "The Liturgical Year," Advent, pp. 508–9).

The following interesting reason for the use of the *Magnificat* at Vespers is thus given by Bede ("Works," 5, 306):—"It comes to pass, by the bounty of the Lord, that if we at all times meditate upon the acts and sayings of the Blessed Mary, the observance of chastity and the works of virtue will always continue in us. For the excellent and salutary custom has grown up in Holy Church that all shall sing her hymn (the *Magnificat*) every day

with the Vesper Psalms, in order that the recalling of the Lord's Incarnation by this means may the oftener incite the souls of the faithful to devotion, and that the consideration of the example set by His Mother may confirm them in the stability of virtue. And it is meet that this should be done at Vespers, so that the mind, wearied in the course of the day, and distracted by various opinions, may, at the approach of the season of quiet, collect itself in the oneness of meditation, and through this wholesome reminder may hasten to cleanse itself by the prayers and tears of the night from everything useless or harmful which it had contracted by the business of the day."

NOTE 7, p. 17.

The following key to the position in the text of "The Christ" of Cynewulf's paraphrase of the antiphons may be found useful :—

The Greater O's in the order sung at Vespers from December 17th to December 23rd inclusive, according to Sarum use.

1. O Sapientia : *cf.* lines 239–240 (?) of "The Christ."
2. O Adonai : (possibly in the lost beginning of the poem).
3. O Radix Jesse : *cf.* lines 348–377 (?) ,,
4. O Clavis David : ,, 18–49 ,,
5. O Oriens : ,, 104–129 ,,
6. O Rex Gentium : ,, 1–17 ,,
7. O Emmanuel : ,, 130–163 ,,

Four Advent antiphons associated with the great O's by certain mediæval churches.

8. O Virgo Virginum : *cf.* lines 71–103 of the poem.
9. O Rex Pacifica : ,, 214–274 ,,
10. O Mundi Domina : ,, 275 *ff.* ,,
11. O Hierusalem : ,, 50–70 ,,

Two combined antiphons for Lauds on Trinity Sunday.

12. O Beata Trinitas : *cf.* lines 378 *ff.* of the poem.

By way of illustration of Cynewulf's method of interpretation I add translations of his reading of two of the antiphons—*O Oriens* and *O Emmanuel.*

I.—Latin Text.

O Oriens splendor lucis æternæ, et sol justitiæ: veni et illumina sedentes in tenebris et umbra mortis!

Cardinal Newman's translation (*Tracts for the Times, No.* 75).

O Rising Brightness of the everlasting Light and Sun of Righteousness: come Thou and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Cynewulf, 104–129

Eala Earendel	Hail Earendel,
Engla beorhtast	Brightest of angels,
ofer middangeard	Over this mid-earth
monnum sended	Sent unto men:
ond soth fæsta	Thou art the Light-beam,
sunnan leoama	Soothfast and sunbright
torht ofer tunglas	Over the Heavens,
þu tida gehwane	And day-tides of Time,
of sylfum þe	From Thee Thyself
symle inlihtes.	Ever enlightening.
Swa þu God of gode	Son of the just Father
gearo a cenned,	Only begotten
sunu soþan Fæder	In Heaven's glory
swegles in wuldre	Thou livest ever
butan anginne	From the beginning
Æfre wære,	Now and for always:
swa pec nu for þearfum	So now Thy handiwork
þin agen geweorc	In its sore need stress
bideth þurh byldo,	Prayeth Thee boldly
þæt þu þa beorhtan us	That Thou do send to us
sunnan onsende,	Sunbeam of radiance.
on þe sylf cyme	And Thyself comest
þæt thu inledhte	Thou to illumine

þa þe longe ær
prosme beþeahte
ond in peostrum her
sæton sinneahtes synrum bifealdre
deorc heathes sceadu dreogan
sceoldan

Those who from long ago
Wrapt round with darkness
Sit in the night glooms
Shrouded with sin, and cast
Deep in Death's shadow.

II.—Latin Text.

O Emmanuel, Rex et legifer noster, expectatio gentium, et Salvator earum: veni ad salvandum nos, Domine Deus noster!

Newman's translation.

O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the gatherer of the People and their Saviour: come Thou to save us, O Lord our God!

Cynewulf, 130–152.

Eala gæsta God
hu þu gleawlice
mid noman ryhte
nemned wære Emmanuhel
Swa hit engel gecwæth
ærest on Ebresc
þæt is eft gereht
rume bi gerynum:
"Nu is rodera weard
God sylfa mid us."
Swa þæt gomele gefyrn
Ealra cyninga cyning
ond þone clænan eac
sacerd sothlica
sægdon toweard.

Swa se mære iu
Melchisedech,
gleaw in gæste,
godþrym omwrah
Eces alwaldan.

O of all spirits Lord
God the Almighty
Wisely by right wast Thou
Namèd Emmanuel
Named by the angel
First in the Hebrew tongue
Yea, by the mystic ruse
Witness of grace.
"Guardian of angels,
God self now with us!"
E'en as of old time
When young were the years, yet
Old men said truly
Lo, the great King of kings
Priest of the sacred place
cometh of surety.
Yea, as of yore the great
King-priest Melchisedec
Wisest of human souls
Showed forth God's majesty
God the world ruler.

Se wæs æ bringerd	God the law-bringer
lara lædend	He gave them precepts
þam longe his	Who had awaited long
hytan hidercyme.	His advent hither.
Swa hym gehaten wæs	For it was promised them
þæthe Sunu Meotudes	That the one Son of God
sylfa wolde	He the all Ruler
gefælsian	Should Himself purify
foldan mægthe	Nations of earth.
swylce grundes eac	And in his course should seek
Gæstes mægne	Deep Hele's abode
siþe gesecan.	Lord of the Spirits there
Nu hie softe þæs	Waiting so patiently
bidon in bendum	bound in their fetters
hwonne Bearn Godes	Waiting the Child of God
cwome to cearigum.	in their affliction
Forþon cwædon swa	Speaking with doleful cry
suslum geslæhte :	those cast in torments
Nu þu sylfa cum,	"Come Thou, come Thyself
heofones Heahcyning.	High King of Heaven
Bring us hælolif	Bring us True Health of Life
wergum witeþeowum	Now to Thy Weary Thanes
woþe forcymenum,	Worn out with weeping
bitrum bynetearum.	And brine-bitter tears."

Note 8, p. 18.

The dramatic character of this section of Cynewulf's poem was first noted by Professor Conybeare in his Anglo-Saxon lectures at Oxford. "It is in fact a dialogue between the Virgin Mary and Joseph, initiated probably from some of those apocryphal writings current in the Middle Ages under the titles of the Life, or the Gospel, of the Virgin. The dialogue commences with an address by the Virgin to Joseph, expressing her fears lest she should be subjected to the rigour of the Jewish law in the punishment of an adulteress; and the answer of Joseph is occupied, partly by the assurance of his steady belief in

her purity, and other expressions calculated to remove her distress; and partly of prayers and thanksgiving to the Power which had so signally favoured himself and his lineage. It will be readily agreed that this subject, from its grave and mysterious nature, is ill-adapted to the purposes of poetry. The general absence of taste and refinement which characterised the age in which the poem was originally written, may fairly be pleaded in defence of its author; but in the present day no such excuse could well be discovered for a translator. Indeed, I should have felt disposed to pass over the poem without notice, had not the form in which it is written rendered it an object of some curiosity. Dialogues of this kind were probably, in our own country, as in Greece, the earliest and rudest species of the drama; and that here preserved is unquestionably by many years the most ancient specimen of this kind of poetry existing in our native language."

Mr. Gollancz in his introduction to "The Christ," p. xxi., has a somewhat similar comment. He speaks of this dialogue as "the earliest dramatic scene in English literature." "What a contrast," he continues, "an Anglo-Saxon religious drama would have presented to the homely miracles and mysteries of later ages. The original of the greater part of Passus I. must, I think, have been a later hymn-cycle, the 'Joseph and Mary' section being derived from an undiscovered hymn arranged for recital by half-choirs." Mr. Stopford Brooke, "Early English Literature," vol. ii. p. 221, thus speaks of the scene: "It seems to be the first dawning in our literature of the mystery play." But in a later written note to the passage he gives up the idea that it was actually written to be recited "in the market-place on a stage," and is content with Mr. Gollancz to follow Wülker (Grundriss, p. 385) in regarding the scene as derived from some later festival hymn dramatically constructed to be sung in parts.

Note 9, p. 19.

Earendel.—Gollancz's note on this word is as follows: "It is difficult to translate the word adequately; some bright star is evidently meant, probably the same as Orvandels-tà, 'Orwendel's toe,' mentioned in the 'Edda.' . . . 'Earendel' does not occur elsewhere in A. S. poetry as a poetical designation of Christ; the word is interpreted in the Epinal Glossary by 'jubar.'" Professor Cook ("Christ," p. 89, note 104) says: "The first impulse is to translate the word by 'dawn,' partly because in the form 'Earendel,' it glosses *aurora* in the two hymns, 'Splendor paternæ gloriæ' and 'Aurora jam spargit polum.' . . . Finally one might argue in favour of 'dawn' from 'the Dayspring' of Luke i. 78, a word which, first used in this place by Tyndale, has been retained even in the R.V." I think, however, it is plain from Cynewulf's epithet, "Thou of thy very self dost constantly enlighten every season," that "Earendel" in his idea connotes "the sun" as a poetical designation of Christ. I have somewhere seen the conjecture that "Earendel" was the traditional mythical name of "the Star of Bethlehem."

Note 10, p. 20.

It is not possible, of course, to mark out with absolute precision the chronology of a moral ideal. But there can be little question, I think, that in the history of European civilisation the change of sentiment with regard to the position of woman, and consequently of the ideal of womanhood, synchronises with the change from Pagan to Christian influences, although perhaps it might be difficult to say whether Christianity instituted the change of ideal, or constituted itself the representative of the change. Certainly in the women of Cynewulf's poems—typically in his "Juliana"—the special quality of race cannot be forgotten. Just as the Teutonic racial element is responsible, no doubt, for much of the sombre Puritan aspect of the Anglo-

Saxon Christian's faith, and especially his lurid conception of the future of the unfaithful, so the same element affected the Early English conception of womanhood. The women of Cynewulf are noble women, sweet and winsome, clothed in a tender light—he always, indeed, speaks of women preferably in terms of light: "My sweetest sunshine!" "Light of mine eyes," "What radiant beauty hast thou!"—and yet almost always represented also as of a character strenuous and firm, with a resoluteness, purpose, and will carried almost to grimness. It is an ideal, one is glad to think, that has persisted long in the hearts of Cynewulf's countrymen. Witness Wordsworth's lines:

> "The reason firm, the temperate will,
> Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill:
> A perfect woman, nobly planned
> To warn, to comfort, and command."

In this connection the following passage from Mr. Stopford Brooke's "Early English Literature," vol. i. pp. 274–5, may be quoted: "The saintly women, who in the days of martyrdom kept their chastity against the tyranny of men and the threats of the Demon, like Juliana whom Cynewulf sang, passed, like the ancient goddesses who brought peace and protection to the faithful wife of the good spinner, from land to land, and became dear to every household. When the shepherd Eoves, in Bishop Ecgwine's legend, told that he saw in a forest glade fair women singing a magic song, and thought them perhaps heathen haunters of the forest land, the Bishop saw in them a vision of the Virgin Mother and angels, and in the spot where they had sung rose the abbey of Evesham. It was no longer Choosers of the Slaughter or Elf-women that rode in the air or shot deadly spears, but figures of excelling beauty, clothed in light, singing softly, took their place—the Angels of God whom Caedmon exalts, and Cynewulf is unwearied in praising, who brighten the pages of Bæda from legend to legend, whose songs are not of war but of spiritual peace, and who receive the

warriors of Christ into the heavenly Hall and to the heavenly Banquet. The relations of women to men, which we have seen honoured in "Beowulf," and which played so large a part in English policy and war while England was yet heathen, received a fresh dignity in Christianity; and this new source of emotion produced many a poetic story. It increased the material of literature. The double monasteries, which afterwards became the cause of scandal, were, while they kept their first purity, the cause of tender and beautiful friendships between grave men and holy women. The relations of Hild and Aidan, of Cuthbert and Ælflæda, of Cuthbert and Verca, of Ealdhelm and the virgins whose praise he wrote and to whom his letters are so gay, of Boniface and the nuns who wrote to him so lovingly, were charming, full of grace and poetry, though, when the men were not Cuthbert and Aidan, similar relationships soon degenerated. The great abbesses were great folk in Northumbria. Heiu, who founded Hartlepool, was noble; so was Verca of Tynemouth. Hild, whom we know, and Ebba, whose monastery of Coldingham, seated on its lofty cape, rivalled its sister of Whitby; Ætheldreda who, amidst the rushy fens, founded Ely on its emerald isle; Ælflæda, as patriotic as religious, who finally brought peace to Wilfrid—were all princesses, powers in the state, with whom kings and bishops had to count, whose advice was taken in great movements, and whose lives, and all the legends which the emotion of the people for noble womanhood collected round them, became for centuries the material for ballad and song; but more especially for that silent literature which is, as it were, the background of the literature which is written—the popular emotion, the feelings of the mother and father and child in hamlet and town, the memories and prayers in times of distress and joy, which come together, like doves to their dwelling, to the names of the women who have consoled or exalted the world."

NOTE 11, p. 20.

"As the source of Part I. is found in the Breviary, so also is the principal source of Part II. the Ascension Sermon of Pope Gregory the Great. The fact that Gregory was the Father of English Christianity, or at least of Roman Christianity in England, together with the circumstance that to him was attributed the constitution of the liturgy, the compilation of the musical service books employed by the Church, and the instruction of the school for chanters from which England had received its training in sacred song, imparts a singular interest to this poetic amplification of one of his most eloquent homilies" (Cook's "Christ," p. xliii.). Ozanam is tempted to call him the last of the Romans. If this be true, he in whom ancient Rome died was he in whom the civilisation of England began to live.

Gregory's Homily on the Ascension is 29 of his Homilies on the Gospels (Migne 76, 1218–9), extracts from which in the Breviary formed the Lessons at Nocturns in the Octave of the Ascension.

Another important source of this Part II. of Cynewulf is the spirited Ascension Hymn ascribed to the Venerable Bede, *Hymnum canamus gloriæ*. This hymn, which consists of 128 lines, is printed in full by Giles in his "Miscellaneous Works of Venerable Bede," i. 83–86; and in part by the Surtees Society in their "Latin Hymns of the Anglo-Saxon Church," from an eleventh century MS. at Durham.

NOTE 12, p. 22.

Athanasius, *de Incarnatione*, 54, "*Αὐτὸς ἐνηνθρώπησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοποιηθῶμεν.*" Compare also Gregory, *Orat.* xlii. 17, "How should He not be God, to insert in passing a bold deduction, by whom thou also dost become God." But although it should be noticed that this deification, as understood by the

Greek Church, did not by any means merely signify "becoming like God"—it is the ineffable, the transcendent, which is described as *θεία φυσις*, because it is enjoyed for ever—yet the interval between Christ, who was born and did not become Son of God, and the sons of adoption, is always very strongly emphasised by the Greek Fathers.

NOTE 13, p. 22.

Commenting on the lines 558–585, which describe an episode called the "Harrowing of Hell," an event which strictly should follow a record of the Resurrection, not of the Ascension, Professor Cook rightly, I think, points out that Bede's Hymn, mentioned above, is a sufficient illustration of the fact that strict chronological order need not be expected in lyrico-dramatic writing. Nevertheless, Mr. Stopford Brooke's interpretation of the passage, though I think mistaken, is interesting. He considers the whole passage a fragment of another poem by Cynewulf, clumsily interpolated at this point when he was refitting the several parts of "The Christ" written separately as a whole, and taking no particular pains to fit it properly into its place. "The episode," he says, "is really a choric hymn, supposed to be sung by the host of angels who come forth from the gates of Heaven on the day of the Resurrection to meet and welcome the Old Testament saints, as, rising from Hades, they mount the sky with Christ. The scene is laid in mid space. The angels from Heaven have met the ascending bands, and when Cynewulf sees this mighty meeting in his vision, the warrior awakens in him, and the speech the angelic leader makes to his followers is such as a heathen chief might have made to his Lord returning from war with the spoils of victory." (*E. E. L.*, ii. 227.)

NOTE 14, p. 23.

It is interesting to compare Cynewulf's rendering of Psalm xxiv. 7, which was sung as an antiphon at the Second Nocturne

of Easter Eve, with this stanza from Giles Fletcher, "Christ's Victory and Triumph":—

> "'Toss up your heads, ye everlasting gates,
> And let the Prince of Glory enter in!
> At whose brave volley of sidereal states
> The sun to blush, and stars grow pale, were seen,
> When leaping first from earth He did begin
> To climb His angels' wings; then open hang
> Your crystal doors,' so all the chorus sang
> Of heavenly birds, as to the stars they nimbly sprang."

NOTE 15, p. 23.

Following upon these lines, there intervenes a passage, 658–684, upon "The Gifts of Men," a theme which is a common motive of early poetry—we shall see it repeated in Langlands' "Piers Plowman"—but, as interpreted by Cynewulf, of finer poetic quality than is shown elsewhere. It may have come to him from the similar thought in the Thirteenth Book of Homer's "Iliad," 726–734, or more likely from Pope Gregory's Homily on the "Gifts of the Spirit," in 1 Corinthians xii. 8. The passage I may render as follows:—

> "Lo! the world shaper,
> God's spirit-son,
> There to ennoble us,
> Gave to us grace,
> Home-seats eternal
> Far above angels:
> And also manifold
> Wisdom of soul.
> Sowed there and set there
> Lore for men's minds:
> One He gave eloquence,
> Wisely he sendeth it
> Through the mind's memory
> As a sweet mouth-guest,

Wisdom right noble;
Yea, he can say and sing
Full many hidden things,
Who in his heart holds
Masterful wisdom:
One can with fingers deft
Loud before heroes
Wake the shrill harp-strings,
Greeting the 'glee-beam':
One can interpret well
God given Law:
One can the star's wide course
Trace through the heavens:
One can the spoken-word
Write with a cunning pen:
To one in stress of fight
War-luck he giveth,
When the sharp spear shower,
Wing'd work of arrows,
O'er leaps the shield-fence:
One can right boldly
O'er the salt sea streams
Drive the black war ships
Swift through the surges:
One can the lofty trees
Climb to their topmost steep:
One can with smith-craft
Fashion war-weapons:
One can the spacious ways
Of the wide field-plain
Mete the out-going:
Thus doth the mighty One,
He the true Bairn of God,
Grant men His gifts on earth,
Grant to them equally;
Not to one man of all
Granteth all wisdom,

Lest pride should injure him;
By his own skill-craft
Raised beyond others."

NOTE 16, p. 24.

In "Modern Language Notes" for June 1889, Professor Cook of Yale proved that one important source of Cynewulf's Part III. is the following alphabetic Hymn, quoted by Bede in his *De Arte Metrica* :—

Hymnus de Die Judicii.

Apparebit repentina dies magna Domini,
fur obscura velut nocte improvisos occupans.

Brevis totus tum parebit prisci luxus sæculi,
totum simul cum clarebit præterisse sæculum.

Clangor tubæ per quaternas terræ plagas concinens,
vivos una mortuosque Christo ciet obviam.

De cælesti Judex arce, majestate fulgidus,
Claris angelorum choris comitatus aderit.

Erubescet orbis lunæ, sol et obscurabitur,
Stellæ cadent pallescentes, mundi tremit ambitus.

Flamma ignis anteibit justi vultum Judicis,
cælos, terras, et profundi fluctus ponti devorans.

Gloriosus in sublimi Rex sedebit solio;
angelorum tremebunda circumstabunt agmina.

Hujus omnes ad electi colligentur dexteram;
pravi pavent a sinistris, hædi velut fætidi.

"Ite," dixit Rex ad dextros, "regnum cæli sumite
Pater vobis quod paravit ante omne sæculum.

Karitate qui fraterna me juvistis pauperem,
Karitatis nunc mercedem repostate divites."

Læti dicent: "Quando, Christe, pauperem te vidimus,
te, Rex magne, vel egentem miserati juvimus."

Magnus illus dicet Judex: "Cum juvistis pauperes,
panem, domum, vestem dantes, me juvistis humiles."

Nec tardabit et sinistris loqui justus Arbiter:
in gehennæ maledicti flammas hinc discedite;

Obsecrantem me audire despexistis mendicum,
nudo vestem non dedistis, neglexistis languidum.

Peccatores dicent: "Christe, quando te vel pauperem
te, Rex magne, vel infirmum contemnentes sprevimus.

Quibus contra Judex altus: "Mendicanti quamdiu
opem ferre despexistis, me sprevistis improbi."

Retro ruent tum injusti ignes in perpetuos,
Vermis quorum non morietur, flamma nec restringuitur

Satan atro cum ministris quo tenetur carcere,
fletus ubi mugitusque, strident omnes dentibus.

Tunc fideles ad cælestem sustollentur patriam
choros inter angelorum, regni petent gaudia.

Urbis summæ Hierusalem introibunt gloriam
Vera lucis atque pacis in qua fulget visio.

X PM. Regem jam paterna claritate splendidum
ubi celsa beatorum contemplantur agmina—

Ydri fraudes ergo cave, infirmentes subleva
aurum temne, fuge luxus si vis astra petere

Zona clara castitatis lumbos nunc præcingere
In occursum magni regis fer ardentes lampades.

NOTE 17, p. 24.

Cynewulf was the first old English writer of whom we have any knowledge to lay emphasis upon the story of the Invention of the Cross and Constantine's premonitory dream, related in

Eusebius, "Life of Constantine," Bk. I., chap. xxviii.-xxxi. He seems to have treated of the subject three times, in this passage of "The Christ," lines 1084 and onwards, in the "Elene," lines 69-104, and in the separate poem "The Dream of the Rood," if, as seems most likely, he was the author of it. Professor Sweet in "Old English Texts," p. 125, commenting on the Runic inscriptions of the celebrated Ruthwell Cross in Dumfries, which are apparently quotations from this Latin poem, says: "As regards the authorship of the poem, I hold fast to the opinion that it is a portion of the epilogue to the 'Elene,' preserved entire in the Vercelli MS., and consequently is the work of Cynewulf. Also that the complete original text of the Cross poem is that from which the Vercelli recension was copied. The sculptor or designer ('Caedmon' or 'Cadmon Made Me') of the Ruthwell Stone, having only a limited space at his command, selected from the poem such verses as he thought most appropriate, and engraved them wherever he had room for them." The following verse translation of the Poem is by Mr. Moorsom (1901):—

"Ho, Brethren, list the dream I tell,
The best that e'er to man befell,
How, when the world was hushed to rest,
And men lay still by sleep oppressed,
Amid the visions of the night
Before me rose a wondrous sight;
I dreamt a tree of golden light
With radiant splendour glistening bright
Was borne upon the air;
Methought the four arms glimmered bare,
Save that on each a jewel rare
Flamed on the night a ruddy glare;
And five gems clustered, whence they sprung,
All ruby-red
Above my head:
'Twas thus the Beacon-Ensign hung.

I saw the fair ones in the sky,
With Spirits of the Holy dead,
Intent upon the Mystery:
And all that saintly were—'tis said—
All who by nobleness were led
All on our earth
Of heavenly birth
Cast longing looks on high."

NOTE 18, p. 26.

Miss Havergal's rendering of this same idea in the hymn "I gave my life for thee, what hast thou done for me?" is well known, but two other modern parallels, much more beautiful, one the pathetic poem by Miss Christina Rossetti, and one the remarkable, because perhaps so unexpected, rendering of the idea, in the opening verses of Verlaine's "Sagesse," may be quoted here. This is Miss Rossetti's poem:—

"I bore with thee long weary days and nights,
Through many pangs of heart, through many tears,
I bore with thee, thy hardness, coldness, slights,
For three and thirty years.

Who else had dared for thee what I have dared?
I plunged the depth most deep from bliss above;
I not My flesh, I not My spirit spared;
Give thou Me love for love.

For thee I thirsted in the daily drouth;
For thee I trembled in the nightly frost;
Much sweeter thou than honey to My mouth,
Why wilt thou still be lost?

I bore thee on My shoulders and rejoiced:
Men only marked upon My shoulders borne
The branding cross; and shouted, hungry voiced,
Or wagged their heads in scorn.

Thee did nails grave upon Mine hands; thy name
Did thorns for frontlets stamp between Mine eyes:
I, Holy One, put on thy guilt and shame:
I, God, Priest, Sacrifice.

A thief upon My right hand and My left;
Six hours alone, athirst in misery;
At length in death one smote My heart, and cleft
A hiding-place for thee.

Nailed to the racking cross, than bed of down
More dear, whereon to stretch Myself and sleep;
So did I win a kingdom—share My crown;
A harvest—come and reap."

And here are the lines of Verlaine :—

" Mon Dieu ! m'a dit : ' mon fils, il faut m'aimer. Tu vois
Mon flanc percé, mon cœur qui rayonne et qui saigne,
Et mes pieds offensés que Madeleine baigne
De larmes, et mes bras douloureux sous la poids.

De tes péchés, et mes mains ! et tu bois la croix,
Tu vois les clous, le fiel, l'éponge et tout t'enseigne
A n'aimer, en ce monde où la chair règne,
Que ma Chair et mon Sang, ma parole et ma voix.

Ne t'ai-je pas aimé jusqu'à la mort moi même,
O mon frère en mon Père, O mon fils en l'Esprit,
Et nai-je pas souffert, comme c'était écrit ?

N'ai-je pas sangloté ton angoisse suprême,
Et n'ai-je pas sué la sueur de tes nuits,
Lamentable ami qui ma cherches où je suis."

NOTE 19, p. 29.

Stopford Brooke in "Early English Literature." From the same book (vol. i. p. 266) I may, perhaps, most fitly close these notes and illustrations of Cynewulf's poetry with this passage on

the interpenetration of Christian and heathen legend in the beginnings of early English literature :—

"It would have been a pity in the interests of literature if the romantic elements of the old heathendom, especially those which arose out of the personification of the savage or gentle forms of the life of nature, had been blotted out by Christianity. . . . The poetry of the past drew its elements only from war, nature-myths, and ancestral heroism. The new poetry or the new poetic feeling drew its elements from the whole of human life, entered into all the outgoings of the human heart, found its subjects in the common doings of daily life. Christianity made all the life of every man and woman interesting and impassioned from the cradle to the grave. No one can read 'The Ecclesiastical History,' by Bæda, without seeing the truth of this statement. The book, in all its stories, is steeped in poetic feeling. Religion, with its ideals, laid its hands of awe and of love on men, from the king to the slave, and on all their relations one to another. It made a country of which all were citizens by right : it made a society which knit together all classes into a union in which the various kingdoms of England dissolved their differences and their wars. It brought together all men in one relation ; it filled those doings of life which were common to all with one spirit. In this fashion it expanded the whole world of feeling, and though I cannot say that all these new elements were actually worked out in Anglo-Saxon literature, yet the new acre of poetic work was ploughed and sown, and the seed was afterwards to grow into a great harvest."

LECTURE II

WILLIAM LANGLAND

"Langland's work was that of a reformer; and the English reformers of the sixteenth century were right when they saw in him a forerunner. The Puritan element, which was destined to impress itself so powerfully upon English life and literature in the seventeenth century, broke forth for the first time in Langland. One of the greatest in the majestic line of English poets, whose muse was inspired by the highest interests of man, those of religion, he was the worthy predecessor of Milton. . . . Out of somewhat ruder materials he created a style whose dignity, vigour, and national spirit endure beside the more perfect art of Latin and greater poets" (Ten Brink, "English Literature," vol. i. p. 367).

LECTURE II

WILLIAM LANGLAND

"*He shall stand at the right hand of the poor.*"—PSALM cix. 31.

THE Divine Founder of our religion, the great Head of our Church, is known in the sacred records, and has been designated from time to time in the long history of the Christian Society, by many names and many titles.

Is there any true sense in which it is right for you and me, without irreverence, to speak of Jesus Christ as the greatest of Social Emancipators, the most potent of Social Reformers? Is there in the personality of Jesus any element of character which, if we were speaking of a modern leader of thought or action, we should feel obliged to designate as democratic or socialistic? Is there in the religion of Jesus Christ any specific quality which of itself seems to create a social Message such as our modern world especially needs to hear?

I think that there is. At any rate with this thought in your minds let me ask you, by way of introduction to my lecture to-day, to go back for a moment or two, and try to feel once more if you will the social significance of that life manifested in Galilee all those years ago.

Now there is no fact more removed from controversy than this, that the supreme concern of Jesus Christ, as exhibited in the sacred record of His ministry on earth, was the disclosure to each individual human soul of its right relation to God. One of His earliest disciples, S. Philip, quite accurately interpreted that central desire of His Master when he said: "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." And to that revelation of the Father all else in the Gospel of Jesus Christ was subordinate. All the rest of His teaching, in fact, may be regarded as by-products thrown off or precipitated in the process of reaching the special result desired. And such a by-product—most valuable no doubt, but still a by-product—was, in my opinion, the teaching of Jesus Christ in regard to social questions. Jesus was not, therefore, in the first place, a social reformer. He was a revealer of the spiritual basis of all true life. He was not primarily a social agitator with a plan. He was a poetic idealist with a vision. He looked at the social world from above and always approached its problems from within. In a word, revelation—not revolution—was His method. He offered to humanity, therefore, not social reform by organisation but social reform by inspiration. "I am come," He said, "that ye might have life and have it more abundantly." The communication of vitality, the contagion of personality, this is the secret of Jesus —for the individual first and then for society — for what is born in the bone of the individual must eventually show itself in the blood of society.

But having said this—and I shall have further to emphasise this thought of the essential individualism of Christ's teaching before I close—it must not be forgotten that there was much in the attitude of Jesus Christ towards the social environment of His own time which explains, if it does not entirely justify, the position of those who from time to time, in the course of the Church's history, have emphasised the profoundly socialistic import of the Gospel.[1]

The Church has never been able, thank God, to forget that when Christ came He came as a poor man in the outward rank of an artisan. He was a true child of the people. In the very song of praise which burst from His mother's lips, when she knew that of her was the Christ to be born, the democratic note is first sounded which has echoed on through the history of the Church.[1]

You and I are so familiar with the words of the *Magnificat*, as we sing them day by day at Evensong in our churches, that, in all probability, we miss the significance of that note. But when the Church, evening after evening all through the parishes of Christendom, is singing this hymn, she is unconsciously foretelling—the most ignorant and prejudiced of her priests are foretelling—that greatest of all revolutions which the mother of Jesus saw to be involved in the birth and work of Christ. To Mary at that moment of inspiration in which her lips poured forth this birth-song of democracy, was revealed the stupendous reversal, political and social, which the birth of the Son of God, as the Son of Man, as the

son of the poor carpenter's wife, was bound, sooner or later, to produce in all the world.

You will find that same democratic note, the note of social passion, struck by Jesus Himself, when, in the full bloom of manhood, He stood for the first time face to face with his brother men in the synagogue of Nazareth :—

> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
> Because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor;
> He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives
> And recovery of sight to the blind;
> To set at liberty them that are bruised,
> To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

No wonder that the common people heard Him gladly, and listened with delight to the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth.

It would have been strange had they not done so, when we remember how completely such doctrine seemed to satisfy the popular ideal. Of all histories the history of the Jewish people is the one, notwithstanding the outward form of their national constitution, in which the democratic spirit most constantly predominates. No tribunes of the people have ever been so bold as the prophets of Israel. They were, in fact, the champions of popular liberty and popular justice at a time when those virtues met with little regard from either priests or kings. The Old Testament, the Bible of the Israelites, was pre-eminently a Poor Man's Book. The thought that God was the protector of the poor, and the avenger of the oppressed, was to be found on almost every page of it.[2]

When, therefore, Jesus Christ stood up for the first time to speak to the people, He could not well find words more clearly expressing the popular hope and longing than those which He quoted from the great statesman-prophet of His country. And moreover, do not let us forget it, Christ and His disciples were, in fact, surrounded by everything which could tempt human reformers to enter on revolutionary courses; the nation of His day was grievously oppressed and shamefully degraded. The rulers and princes of Judæa were sensual and cruel tyrants, and their tyranny was supported by a central tyranny equally cruel and sensual. Injustice in the form of Pilate sat on the judgment-seat. A foreign soldiery filled the land, "doing violence," "accusing men falsely," "not content with their wages." So oppressive was the fiscal system that the name of the collector of taxes was a byword of loathing and shame: the distress of the people was such that multitudes were ready to follow a teacher into the wilderness, not for the sake of his words, but for the sake of a little bread. And for this oppression there was no appeal to remorse in the breast of the oppressor, or to the tribunal of a civilised world. There seemed no hope but in patriotic arms. Nor was the nation incapable of wielding them. The spirit of Gideon and Judas Maccabæus glowed in it still. It cherished the constant hope of a Deliverer.

And the Deliverer came, a radical revolution did take place, an immense transformation of society was brought about. The popular ideal was realised, though not according to the popular idea. The Sermon on the Mount, although it must have seemed little short

of mockery to those whose passionate enthusiasm for the redemption of Israel centred in the expectation of a militant Messiah, did in reality contain the popular charter of the world's liberties, did inaugurate as vast a revolution as the world has ever known. To ascribe the heroic character to those citizens of the new kingdom who were not proud and rich, valiant and strong, but to those who were meek-hearted, poor in spirit, peacemakers, childlike, innocent, simple, may have come as a chilling disappointment to the popular hopes of His day; yet beneath those beatitudes of the new kingdom Christ had placed a principle which, in giving a new valuation to the human soul as such, and ennobling it with the patent of His own nobility, has proved itself not only the most powerful solvent of ancient civilisation, but also the great motive force in the progressive social order of the present.[3]

Obviously it would not be possible, within the limits of our present opportunity, to trace out historically the development of that principle, for it would be to tell the history, not only of Christianity, but of modern civilisation. The very briefest recollection, however, of the prominent facts of social development in the West—the Abolition of Slavery, the Enfranchisement of Woman, Representative Democracy, the Protestant Reformation, Free-trade, Free-thought—will be sufficient to remind you how potent has been this principle of the intrinsic value of the human soul as such, revealed by Christ, as a systematic organ of emancipation, not only

in the religious and ecclesiastical sphere, but also in the civil and industrial order of modern Europe.[4]

My purpose, however, to-day is a much humbler one. I want, if I can, to show you how, in regard to our own country at any rate, the spirit of social liberty learnt in the school of Christ was preached to the Englishmen of the fourteenth century by one of our great representative poets. I want you to read with me if you will, in the pages of the "Piers Plowman" of William Langland, a short but important chapter in the history of the genesis of the social conscience in England, and of that conception of the Personality of Jesus Christ as the Master of Conscience, which has still, it seems to me, its lessons for men of our own day. I trust you will not think I am wanting in reverence for the genius of this University if I express my belief that the mass of men are moved to noble issues much more by the presentation of splendid ideals than of clear arguments; that the poetic imagination, in fact, has done far more for the average human will than the philosophic reason.

Anyhow, I am proposing to ask you to consider with me the influence exerted upon the social and spiritual conscience of the England of five centuries ago by that peasant poet, who was also a Christian prophet, a seer of the vision of the present, a prophet of the future kingdom of social righteousness, a rebuker of wickedness in high places, a champion of the poor, a preacher, a teacher at once simple and mystical—simple, because his one endeavour was to translate the text of the

Gospel of Jesus Christ as literally as possible into life; and mystic, because he would allow no merit to any action which is not the direct result of the action of the individual conscience.

Born in the third decade of the fourteenth century, William Langland was the product of an age of great men and of great events. For Europe it was the age of Dante and Petrarch, of Cimabue and Giotto, of Thomas Aquinas and Thomas à Kempis. But for England it was one of the saddest periods of all her history. The brilliant reign of the third Edward was drawing to its close. The collapse of the French War after Crecy; the ruinous taxation of the country, which was consequent upon that event; the terrible plague of the Black Death, sweeping away half the population of England; the iniquitous Labour Laws, which, in face of that depopulation, strove to keep down the rate of wages in the interests of the landlords, had brought the country to the verge of social revolution. Mediæval society in England was, in fact, breaking up—mediæval society and mediæval institutions. Even the Church in its Augustinian conception—modified though that had been by the Franciscan ideal of the apostolic life, and interpreted by the "Summa" of S. Thomas and the writings of the Schoolmen—was yet boldly challenged by that spirit of reform, which in England is associated with the great name of John Wycliff, "the morning star of the Reformation." It is not, however, in the philosophic arguments of John Wycliff—whose "De Dominio Divino" is the work of the greatest Oxford

schoolman of his age—but in the virile, homely English tracts, terse and vehement, which John Wycliff the Reformer wrote for the guidance of his "poore priestes" (and in which incidentally he made once more the English tongue a weapon of literature), that we find the new forces of thought and feeling which were destined to tell upon every page of our later history.[5]

These "poore priestes" of Wycliff, as we know, carried to the people of England much beside the religious doctrines of the Reformer. They imbued, in fact, the mind of the English people with ideas which in these days we should call religious socialism, and which in those led to that great popular uprising which we call the Peasant Revolt.

With that chapter in the social history of England we are all familiar. But the lesson of it—and that lesson was the burden, as I read it, of the Vision of William of Langland—I take to be this:—

The only true revolution is that which is the result of revelation. The force of new thought is always stronger than the force of arms. There can be no safe and lasting change of national condition which is not founded on a previous change of national character. No change of condition, no bettering of environment, is sufficient in itself to make good men. No rearrangement of society, no social transformation, is possible, has ever been possible, or ever will be, except as the application of a religious principle, of a moral development, of a strong and active common faith. And for this reason. Men may easily remake institutions, but they do not so easily remake themselves. As Mr. John Morley

said the other day at Pittsburg, "No politics will suffice of themselves to make a nation's soul." It is indeed a law of social forms, of national institutions, that they are always expressive of national character. They come into existence bearing its impress, and they live only so long as it supplies them with vitality. To change institutions for the better we need to change men for the better. And to do this we must, and shall ever, need religious motive. "Let all men know the truth, and the truth shall make them free."

Now this was the spirit, partly unconscious perhaps, but none the less real, of the teaching which the "poore priestes" of Wycliff had given to the peasantry of England in the fourteenth century, and which bore its fruit both in the social emancipation of that age, and in the great acts of religious freedom of the next. This is also the essential spirit of William Langland's poems. He, like the greatest poet of his age, Dante, saw that the world was out of joint. He too looked with longing for the deliverer who should set it right; he too, with all the powers of his soul, wrestled for the knowledge of social salvation, for himself as for others; he too lifted up his voice in warning and menace before the great and mighty of the earth, before princes and priests; he too held up a mirror to the world, in which it saw both its own image and the ideal to which it had grown faithless.

But, unlike Dante, Langland did not reach a full and clear ideal of life; and hence he failed perfectly to interpret, much less to transfigure, what he had lived

and seen, into a symmetrical, distinctly drawn picture, with the personality of the poet in its centre. The poem of "Piers the Plowman," therefore, is rather perhaps a series of paintings, than a well-conceived artistic whole, whose mutual connection lies more in the intention than in the execution, and each of such paintings has, beside clearly illuminated groups, others which seem enveloped in mist, whose outlines we feel rather than perceive, and still others whose dim figures first receive colour and fancy from our own imagination.

And yet the mind and temper of the poet is all-pervading. Somehow — at least so it affects me — Langland takes hold of the heart of his reader, and compels him to enter into the secret purpose of his prophetic burden. It is not certainly, as in the case of Chaucer, by the music of his language, or by the charm of his imagery, that he is able to do this, but, as I think, by the simple directness of his speech, flashing out suddenly into some salient line which, as Mr. Lowell has said, "gets inside our guard with the home-thrust of a downright word." Langland was not a cheerful and companionable man like Chaucer, but rather, like the satirist of our own age, the peasant philosopher Thomas Carlyle, a sincere, outspoken preacher of righteousness. And in Langland's verse, just as in the prose of Carlyle, the grim earnestness of reforming zeal is tempered by thoughts and maxims in which rude, rustic common sense and broad Hogarthian humour are combined; and never is there missing in his message to his countrymen the note of social passion, of hearty contempt for hypocrisy, of strong, almost

vindictive moral fervour. And it is, I think, largely because of this quality in his verse that we find in "Piers the Plowman" rather than in the "Canterbury Tales"—most true as is that picture of fourteenth-century English life—the distinctive "note" of English religion; that godliness, grim, earnest, and puritan, which was from henceforth to exercise so deep an influence on the national character.[6]

I have only time to give you the merest sketch of the poem.

In the prologue the poet describes himself as wandering on the Malvern hills—

> "I was very forwandered and went me to rest
> Under a broad bank, by a burnside,
> And as I lay and leaned and looked in the water
> I slumbered in a sleeping, it sweyved so merry."

And in his sleep he dreamed, and this was the opening of his dream:—

> "A fair field full of folk I there between
> Of all manner of man the mean and the rich,
> Working and wandering as the world asketh.
> Some put them to the plough played full seldom
> In setting and in sowing swonken full hard
> And won what masters with gluttony waste.
> And some put them to pride, apparelled them thereafter
> In countenance of clothing come disguised in prayer and penance.
> . . . . . .
> And some chose chaffer, they thrive the better
> As it seemeth to our sight as such men thrive
> And some mirth to make as minstrels conneth
> Getting gold with their glee, yet guiltless, I trust."

And some, he says, were

> "Japers and jugglers,
> Judas's children, and some beggars with bags
> Crammed full of bread, and drunken and lazy."

Some were pilgrims and palmers, journeying to Rome, and having "leave to tell lies all their life after." Some weavers and craftsmen, burghers and bondmen, bishops and friars, pardoners and parish priests. Of these, alas! he has little good to say.

> "Parsons and priests plained them to the bishop
> That their parishes were poor since the pestilence time.
> To have licence and leave at London to dwell
> And sing there for simony, for silver is sweet."

But whoever the people were of which our dreamer dreamt, it is plain that they were all of the everyday English working world. They are the same folk, in fact, or almost the same, that Chaucer pictures for us assembling at the Tabard Inn, preparing to make their pilgrimage to Canterbury. Langland's crowd also has a pilgrimage to make, but not along the sunny high-roads of Kent. These pilgrims travel in a mystic land. Three hundred years before Bunyan's Christian they progress along the way of life in quest of truth and the supreme good, and in this Pilgrim's Progress of Langland realities and shadows intermingle, tangible realities, changing shadows. The scheme of the poem defies analysis. There is indeed no skill of artistry about it. All the effects are gained, as it would seem, at haphazard, and without being sought. Langland does not select, or contrive, or arrange. There is no art of change any-

where. It is the scene-shifting of a dream. "With that," says the poet; and we are hundred miles away, and among an entirely different set of characters. "And then," he cries; and once more the scene shifts. The Court of Heaven has faded away, and we find ourselves in a Cornhill ale tavern. On the Malvern Hills the mists lie low, and are at times so fine that we cannot say "it begins here," "it ends there." It is the same with Langland's visions.

And so once in his dream he sees a lovely lady, the Holy Church, and from her he asks the meaning of the High Tower and the Darksome Dungeon which he sees set over against the Fair Field of the world. She tells him that the High Tower is the abode of Truth, the daughter of God the Creator who gives gifts to men; and the Darksome Dungeon is the Castle of Care, where lives the Father of Falseness. And she teaches how great a treasure Truth is, and how the road to the Tower is the way of Love.

"When all treasures are tried, quoth she, Truth is the best.
'God is Love,' saith the text, and it teaches you all
That Truth can be trusted, like dear God Himself.
Who is true of his tongue and telleth no other,
Doeth works that go with it and willeth no man an ill,
Is a god, by the Gospel, aground and aloft,
Yea, like to our Lord, by S. Luke's own words.
And clerks who know this should teach it about,
For Christian and unchristian lay claim to the Truth.
. . . . . .
So then is Love leader of the Lord's folk in Heaven
And a mean as the Mayor is between the King and the Commons,
Right so is Love a leader and the Law shapeth,
Upon man for his misdeeds he taxeth the merchment.

In the heart is its head and its holy well,
In conscience of heart its might beginneth,
As found in the Father, who formèd us all,
Looked on us with love, and let His Son die
Meekly for our misdeeds to amend us all.

. . . . . .

Love is Leech of Life and next our Lord's own self,
And also the right gate that goeth to heaven.
So I say of the texts as I said before
When all treasures be tried, Truth is the best:
I have told thee what truth is, no treasure is better,
I may linger no longer, the Lord be thy guide."

Yet he begs that of her grace she will tell him before she goes how he may know the false one. She bids him turn himself about and see both Falseness and Fauvel—falsehood and flattery. He turns and beholds a woman decked out in glorious apparel.

"Her robe was full rich, of red scarlet engrained
With ribbons of red gold, and of rich stones.
Her array me ravished, such richness saw I never.
I had wonder what she was, and whose wife she was:
'What is this woman,' said I, 'so worthily attired?'
'That is Meed the maid,' quoth she, 'hath noyed me full oft . . .
False was her father, that hath a fickle tongue
And never Truth saith, sithen he come to earth.
And Meed is mannered after him, right as kind asketh,
Qualis pater, talius filius; bona arbor bonum fructum facit.'"

And my Lady Church tells him that on the morrow Lady Meed is to be married to Sir False-fickle-tongue, and "then you may see the whole crew that belongeth to that Lordship," for Fauvel, through his fair speech, hath brought them together. And so she leaves the dreamer to watch the preparations for the wedding.

In the next three sections of the poem we have the forbiddal of the marriage by Theology, who disputes its legality, the adjournment to the King's Court at Westminster, the arraignment there of Lady Meed by Conscience, her attempted refutation of the charges against her which he brings, the judgment of the high chief justice Reason, the final decision of the King that until Reformation is accomplished in the land there shall be no pity, and no wrong shall go unpunished or be atoned for by gifts.

> "No Meed shall buy bail, by Saint Mary in Heaven!
> And wrong by the righteous shall be rightly condemned."

It is a wonderful Hogarthian picture, full of minutest detail and vivid characterisation, crowds, groups, classes, individuals, the King, the Lords, the Commons, the clergy, the lawyers, the people, the whole organisation of the state in Edward III.'s time, telling under allegorical form of the actual evils which were threatening the ruin of society, of the only possible means of reformation, and of the true theory of life.

And then once more the scene shifts, and we come to the vision of the seven deadly sins, and the appearance for the first time of Piers the Plowman, followed by the Pilgrimage of the Penitents to the Tower of Truth.

> "A thousand of men there thronged together
> Cried upward to Christ and to His clean Mother
> To have grace to go with them Truth to seek."

On failure, however, of any to guide them on the road, Peterkin the Plowman himself offers to be their leader—

"By S. Peter of Rome, he cries,
I have an half-acre to ear by the highway.
Had I eared this half-acre and sowed it after
I would wend with you and the way teach."

But Truth himself appears to the Plowman and tells him that the work of ploughing and sowing his half-acre is so important that he is not to leave it, even to lead a pilgrimage. The business of the Plowman is to work, and to help the world to work with him. *Laborare est orare.* If all good men go on pilgrimage who is to do the world's work?

So Peterkin stays at home and preaches the Gospel of Work and Brotherhood for Christ's sake. And this is how he preaches it. "Christ," he says—

"Gave each man a grace to guide himself with,
That idleness encumber him not, envy nor pride.
Some he gave wit with words to show
Wit to win their livelihood as the world asketh,
As preachers and priests and prentices of law
They loyally to live by labour of tongue,
And by wit to make wise others as grace them would teach;
And some he learned craft and cunning of sight
With selling and buying their livelihood to gain;
And some he learned to labour a loyal life and true,
And some he taught to till, to ditch and to thatch,
And some to divine and divide, numbers to know,
And some to compass craftily and colours to make.

. . . . . .

And some to ride and recover what unrightfully was won,
And all he learned to be loyall, and each craft love other.
Though some be cleaner than some, See ye well, quoth He,
That he that followeth the fairest craft to the foulest I could have put him.

Look that none blame other, but love all as brethren;
And who that most mastery can be mildest of bearing,
And crown conscience King and make work your steward."[7]

In another vision Thought instead of Truth appears to the dreamer, and tells him how—

"Do wel: Do bet: and do Best
Are three fair virtues · and be not far to find,
Whoso is true of his tongue and of his two hands,
And through his labour or through his land his livelihood winneth,
And taketh but his own · Do well him followeth.
Do Bet doth right thus · but he doth much more.
He is as low as a lamb · and lovely of speech,
And helpeth all men · after that them needeth.
Do Best is above both · and beareth a bishop's cross,
Is hooked on one end · to hale men from hell."

It is in this allegory—"the Vision of Do Well: Do Bet: Do Best"—that the exaltation of the Plowman takes place.

The question is put, "What is the Vita de Dobet?" And the answer, following the text of S. Paul's great ode on "Charity," in 1 Corinthians xiii., is that the life of Dobet is Love. But who is Love, asks the dreamer? "Without the help of Piers the Plowman," is the reply, "thou canst never see His person."

"And that knoweth no clerke: no creature on earth
But Piers the Plowman. Petrus, id est Cristus."

And so under the guise of the Plowman, in his suffering and humiliation, Christ Himself is represented as the great Social Emancipator; and we are told how the Jews, "who were gentilmen," despised Him

whom they ought to have honoured, and how His followers were labouring men, and how still—

"For our joy and our health, Jesus Christ of Heaven
In a poor man's apparell pursueth us ever,
And looketh upon us in their likeness · and that with lovely cheer
To know us by our kind heart · and casting of our eyes
Whether we love the lords here before our Lord of bliss.
For all we are Christ's creatures · and of his coffers rich
And brethren as of one blood · as well beggars as earls." [8]

Once more the scene shifts, and the poet pictures himself in Malvern Church, falling asleep during the celebration of the Holy Mysteries, and dreaming this dream of the Christ—

"I fell eftsoon to sleep and suddenly I met
That Piers the Plowman, was painted all bloody,
And came in with a cross before the common people
And light like in all things to the Lord Jesus
And then called I Conscience to ken me the truth.
Is this Jesus the jouster? quoth I, the Jews did to death?
Or is it Piers Plowman? who painted him so red?
Quoth Conscience and kneelèd then, these are Christes arms
His colours and coat armour, and he that cometh so bloody
It is Christ with his cross, Conqueror of Christendom."

And so with growing power and vividness the poem draws to its close, with a description of the death of Christ, of His triumph over Death and Hell—told in an allegory which is based on the text of *the Gospel of Nicodemus*—of His Resurrection, of His Ascension, and of the meeting together of Truth and Mercy, Righteousness and Peace, till, with this news of the final victory of Love, the poet wakens from his dream with the joy-bells ringing in his ears on the morning of Easter Day.[9]

There are few passages, I venture to think, in English sacred poetry more sublime in their conception of the Divine figure of Christ than this last section of Langland's vision. True, the figure of the Christ he reveals to us in His final triumph is no imperial king reigning supreme in far-off splendour in the glory of the heavenly palaces, or—as in the Christian saga-poem of Cynewulf, of which I spoke to you last week—leading to battle his thegns and æthelings with the evil host of wicked angels, and casting them down to doom in hell; but a figure of the homely and the friendly Christ, dwelling with humble men, helping them with their crafts, teaching them to plough and to ditch, and to live a leal life and a true: a Divine Comrade, "who standeth at the right hand of the Poor," who "in all their afflictions was afflicted, and by the Angel of His Presence"—the presence of a very human Christ—"saved them," and who also was full of care and concern for the wider good of the common weal: a Reformer, an Emancipator of the captive and the oppressed, the Champion of social rights, the Inspirer of social duty, the revealer of a social ideal for England in the future—a golden age in which folk of every grade shall have learnt to "Do well, to do better, to do best."

And what, my friends, is the lesson of this fourteenth-century poem? Is it not this?—

> "Jesus Christ of heaven
> In poor man's apparell pursueth us ever."

The possibility, that is to say, that the full likeness to Jesus Christ, the ideal Son of God, is stored up in

the Plowman, in the common man of the street, and of the mill, and of the workshop; this, I think, is the lesson, which is at the very heart of William Langland's message to his countrymen. It is, in fact, because of his insistence upon the principle, revealed by Jesus Christ, that humanity wherever it may be found has an infinite value, and that consequently the common man is the true unit of measure, not only for the franchise of the Catholic Church, but also for the Christian State, that his Vision has its chief interest for us to-day, as a picture of those forces which, in reaction from fourteenth-century Papalism and Feudalism, were gradually building up that idea of duty which gave to the England of the next two centuries that social conscience—that reformer's conscience—which is the necessary coefficient of safe Democracy.

There is no need, I think, to discriminate between those elements of the Puritan movement which we may directly trace to the influence of the rediscovered Bible and those which it inherits from the Mother Church of the Middle Ages. The former are more evident, perhaps, in Langland's Vision. But the latter, including that element of Individualism which, in order to find itself, shut itself up in a monastery, are there also. Both, indeed, are inseparable. For no one, in these days of historical criticism, could surely imagine that it was possible for a single generation to take a broad jump, as it were, over the thirty generations preceding it, and to come down on the clear ground of Biblical truth.

Some wise man of our own day has said "that the key of the fourteenth century is to be found in the hand of Dante." And we may, I think, assent to that statement, if only we recognise that the witness to the Christian belief in the consecration of all human society to a definite moral end, as part of the purpose of God, which is expressed in the "De Monarchia" of Dante, and in his "Divina Commedia," is based, just as the "Vision of Piers Plowman" by William Langland is based, on the necessity of finding an answer to this very simple question, "How to reconcile the daily conduct of the average Christian with the revealed principles of his religion?" Reduced to simplest terms, that is the question which is at the back of that great social problem which has faced the Church of Christ throughout her age-long history. For is it not true that most of the sects and parties which have been condemned by the Church as heretical — Montanists, Paulicians, Waldenses, the Fraticelli, the "Poor Priestes" of Wycliff, the Lollards, the Anabaptists, unconnected with each other in their origin—all bear on their face the mark of a common descent from a single principle, namely, the desire to act on a literal interpretation of Christ's precepts without any regard to the reserves of Church tradition or worldly experience? And yet, indeed, from the first it has been felt by the Church itself that the authoritative leaders and teachers of Christianity could not safely trust the interpretation of the moral law of Christ, much less the practical application of Christ's spiritual principles to life, entirely to the intuitive perceptions of each individual Christian, or

even less perhaps to the average public opinion of each individual group or church of Christians. There must, they thought, be some legitimate place for the principle of authority in relation to the Discipline of the Christian life equally as in relation to the Doctrines of the Christian faith. And they were right. The privilege of the individual conscience, the right of private judgment—Individualism, in a word—was and is, of course, of the very essence of Christianity; but Individualism, it ought never to be forgotten, if it is to be truly ethical, must put itself wholly into social relationship. Only a perfect individual, perfectly knowing and mastering himself, can be truly in society, and only in society can a man become a perfect individual.

For the imperfect individual, then, for the *unus multorum* (Horace, *Satires*, i. ix. 71, 72), for the ordinary Christian, for the average citizen of the world, the kingdom of God upon earth—revealed as an ideal for all time in Christ's Sermon on the Mount—that poem of the world's second springtide—bringing to men new social chances, new social impulses, new guarantees for civilised life, will always seem too ideal. The counsels of the Sermon will always seem to him "counsels of perfection." He will crave, therefore, always for a more positive discipline, a more precise plan of life, a fixed code of morals, mapping out the whole department of conduct with prescribed maxims and definite rules.

And the history of the Church, we know, at least, on its institutional side, has largely been a record of the attempt to supply this need for the imperfect individual.

We are all quite aware how in the slow alchemy of history, the evangelic liberty, the spontaneous enthusiasm of the Sermon on the Mount came to be gradually transmuted into the case-bound legalism of the Latin penitentials with their ghastly catalogues of imagined possibilities of sin, each with their own specific remedy. The Free Church of the primitive age, such as Jesus had conceived it (S. Matt. xviii. 20), such as S. Paul a generation later had still understood it (2 Cor. i. 21), such as Tertullian (*Apolog.* 39) and Origen (Celsus 3, 51) had described it, seemed to the legal precisians of the end of the third century little better than the promise of an anarchic Utopia. The fourth century did not close before the victory of the Roman spirit of legalism was complete. The "De Officiis Ministrorum" of S. Ambrose of Milan, with its fusion of the Roman conception of personal rights with the stoic conception of reciprocal relations, is but a *rechauffée* of Cicero's "Manual of Morals," compiled three centuries earlier. And although the "De Civitate Dei" of Augustine does indeed outline a new ideal of the kingdom of God upon earth, it is no longer the primitive conception of the Sermon on the Mount, but a Roman ideal in which the Empire takes its place within the Church, and the Church sets itself to the great secular task *regere imperio populos.* Nine centuries later, when the complex system of mediæval discipline was completely codified (as, for example, in the "De Pœnitentia" of Gratian's "Decretals," or in the second part of the "Summa" of S. Thomas Aquinas) the Church of Christ appears as no other than ancient imperial Rome itself, regaining its authority over the

Barbarians who have conquered it, imposing upon them its decretals, as it formerly imposed its laws, governing them by its cardinals as it once governed them by its legates and proconsuls. The kingdom of God and His Christ had almost become the kingdom of this world and of the Prince of its power.

But the Spirit of Christ was not left without witness even in those dark days. When the theologians and the schoolmen had failed, God spake to His people by His poets.

Dante Alighieri in Italy, William Langland in England, the one appealing to the intellect of the cultured classes as a philosopher in whose writings the *sæva indignatio* of the baffled Reformer is blended with the penetrative insight and the sublime optimism of the Poet; the other appealing to the hearts of the English people, as a popular preacher of social justice and practical common sense in religion, as a mystic apostle also of love and conscience, and holy poverty, succeeded for a time in reviving the memory of the lost ideal and the hope of an immediate realisation of the kingdom of God upon earth.[10]

In Dante's vision we see "the best thought of mediæval Christendom, enriched with all the secular and religious culture of the crowning century of the Middle Age, inspired with the undimmed religious fervour of the 'ages of faith,' keenly observant of the stirring life of Christian Europe, reflecting upon the very same problem that had busied the mind of Augustine amid the wreck of a falling empire nine centuries before."

But in the "De Monarchia" of Dante and in his "Divina Commedia," we find, as we do not find in the "De Civitate Dei" of Augustine, a belief in the essential consecration of secular government and of human society to a definite moral end as part of the distinct purpose of God. "Without the *Civitas terrena*," says Dante, "the *Civitas Dei* becomes unattainable, since only in the brotherhood of mankind can man develop all the capacities of the soul necessary for his entrance into the kingdom of heaven. . . . It is not as a governing body, as a *Societas Perfecta*, that the Church will regenerate human nature, but as a brotherhood." Dante's vision, in fact, is saturated with the spirit, as we should say, of modern thought, of socialistic morality, of civic energy, of patriotism; above all, perhaps, of the supremacy of science. It is largely, no doubt, because of this, because in Dante's philosophy of civilisation we seem to see the Divine Right of the Church, and the Historical Right of the State, giving way to that higher principle of Law rooted in Liberty and of the moral ends of society (which we believe to be the parent of all that is best in modern civilisation), that so many of our leaders and teachers in Church and State to-day can still go to this fourteenth-century prophet to find an unfailing source of inspiration and solace in face of the perplexing social problems of the present.

The dream of the peasant poet of the Malvern hills is necessarily of a less wide scope than that of Dante. For Langland is a thoroughly typical Englishman, in all probability a descendant of one of the old

English yeoman families, using, for patriotic motives, as his poetical instrument the rude alliterative measure of the old English minstrelsy and the quaint dramatic forms of old English miracle plays, judging, no doubt rightly, that the popular audience for whom he wrote would be more deeply touched by the ancient rhythms of their race than by the meretricious attractions of the newly-imported foreign verse of France. Trained in the learning of the monastic schools, he embodies many of the virtues which distinguished the men of the Renaissance; but he shares in a still larger measure the virtues of the men of the Reformation—the Puritan earnestness of Bunyan and Milton, the practical common-sense and humour of Chaucer and Shakespeare. It is a characteristic feature of Dante's "Divina Commedia" that the constant guide of the poet should be either Virgil, the most learned of classic poets, or Theology, conceived as an abstract figure. It is equally characteristic of Langland that his guide to the Tower of Truth should be either Peterkin the humble Plowman, or Conscience regarded as a concrete personality, the Constable Inwit. While Langland, in common with the Franciscan friars, exalts the virtues of love and holy poverty, and exhorts his hearers, in almost Dante's words, to make "glad wonder and sweet looks the occasion of holy thought," * he is obviously in sympathy with the political doctrines of Wycliff, and even, perhaps, with the socialism of John Ball, the mad priest of Kent. Langland, in fact, realised quite as clearly as did Wycliff that Christianity was a *res communissima*. Certainly he

* *Paradiso*, canto xi. 76.

insists on the essential equality of all men, and the strongest denunciations of his satire are directed against the abuse of justice and the falsity and the hypocrisy which corrupt the very springs of social action. Langland is unlike Dante in this, however, that his conception of society is not quite symmetrical or logical, partly, no doubt, because he is less learned, partly because he is more practical. His social ideal is in many respects a reflection of the actual order of things under which he himself lived; but he, just as much as Dante, believed that the true ideal of social order was revealed in the doctrines of the Christian Church. Both men, in fact, find themselves face to face with practically the same social disease, and the ideal remedy suggested by each man proceeds from a similar method of imaginative reasoning.[11]

But neither the future of Dante's vision or of Langland's came as quickly as they had hoped, or by the means which Dante, at least, thought he foresaw. Yet—

> "The old order changeth, giving place to the new,
> And God fulfils Himself in many ways."

Faith in the principle of historic continuity, in other words, the belief that society cannot make a fresh beginning because true progress must always be a development of order; faith in the richness and variety and complexity of human life always to be taken count of in all our endeavours to hasten the kingdom of God upon earth—which is the essential basis of Dante's philosophy—faith in the fellowship of human service,

by which the weak brother ought ever to have as champion and protector the public Christian conscience, because—

"Jesus Christ of Heaven
In poor man's apparell pursueth us ever"—

a prospective faith in ultimate social perfection, because Christ has proclaimed a Fatherly will to be the origin of all life and the root of humanity—which is the essential message of Langland's vision—have come to our modern age, but they have come by a God's way of which neither Dante nor Langland dreamed.

For they have come, on the one hand, as the result of that rebirth of literature and art and science which we know by the name of the Renaissance, and which we may sum up perhaps best in the splendid image of a great interpreter of history,—"Greece had risen from the dead with the New Testament in her hands;" and, on the other, as a reaction from that affirmation of Individualism which was the message of the Reformation and the systematic organ of emancipation, alike in the two great transformations of society, the one spiritual and ecclesiastical, the other economic and industrial, which belong respectively to the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries.

Yes, I repeat, the essential message of Langland's vision, the worship of a Christ, who "in poor man's apparell pursueth us ever," a Christ who is the ideal Son of God, and yet a Christ who reveals Himself to us "through the least of His brethren," the common

man of the street, of the mill, of the workshop, of the field, has come to us, is ever coming to our modern world in God's own way.

But how are we receiving it, you and I, this social Gospel, this vision of Christ the social Emancipator?

When, on the one hand, we consider the ideal of His Church, "the splendid having and royal hope," the zeal for souls, the sympathy for bodily needs, which are the individual fruits of a single love, exhibited in the one blessed life of Jesus, to be reflected in His Church, as witnessing for Him, as representing Him in this present world, as occupied with His work of setting up the Kingdom of God under and amidst the natural everyday conditions of human life; and on the other, when we consider the Babel life of our great cities, that black cloud of pauperism brooding over the richest of the countries of the earth, of drunkenness, with all its foul brood of folly and sensuality and crime, of social revolt, of the almost standing feud of Capital and Labour, of endemic misery and avoidable disease, of all the countless ills which make up the terrible inheritance of ancestral error, of our social heredity and of our social environment—when we think of these things, what a sorry compromise, what a miserable evasion, what a vast conspiracy to be blind does not even the best side of our Christian civilisation seem in England to-day? Or, again, when in the ethical realm of life-values we consider the office of the Church of Christ in regard to the greatest of her social duties, the formation and building up of human character and the provision of the civic securities of character in a candid, enlightened, vigorous Public

Conscience, when we compare the ideal citizen of the kingdom, as revealed in the Sermon on the Mount, as set forth for us in the Apostolic writings, and in its measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, thinking first of all of whatsoever things are lovely, pure, just, noble, and of good report, with the actual result as seen, I will not say, in the exceptional saintly characters of Christendom, but as seen in the unit of citizen life, as we know him to-day, not only in Russia or in France, but in our own England—the downmost man, in city or in field, the unemployable man of the street, the dullest-witted labourer of the village, the product of the rudest, homeliest life of the people—I ask you, putting these two types side by side, who is not conscious of the depth of contrast?

Many of you are familiar, no doubt, with Jean François Millet's picture of the "Man with the Hoe." Some of you, perhaps, may know the fine interpretation of that picture by a modern Californian poet.

"Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans
Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,
The emptiness of ages in his face,
And on his back the burden of the world.
Who made him dead to rapture and despair,
A thing that grieves not and that never hopes,
Stolid and stunn'd, a brother to the ox?
Who loosened and let down this brutal jaw?
Whose was the hand that slanted back this brow?
Whose breath blew out the light within this brain?
Is this the thing the Lord God made and gave
To have dominion over sea and land;
To trace the stars and search the heavens for power;
To feel the passion of eternity?
. . . . . .

Through this dread shape the suffering ages look;
Time's tragedy is in that aching stoop;
Through this dread shape humanity betrayed,
Plundered, profaned, and disinherited,
Cries protest to the Judges of the world,
A protest that is also prophecy.
O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,
Is this the handiwork you give to God?
This monstrous thing distorted and soul quenched,
How will you ever straighten up this shape?
Touch it again with immortality,
Give back the upward looking and the light,
Rebuild in it the music and the dream,
Make right the immemorial infamies,
Perfidious wrongs, immedicable woes?"

My friends, I ask you to place this picture of the twentieth-century poet beside that of his fourteenth-century brother, concerning whom I have been speaking to you to-day, and to regard both of them in the light of the judgment of that Master "Who standeth at the right hand of the Poor," and how does the protest of either and of each of them appeal to your conscience to-day, to the public Christian conscience of to-day?

Is not the protest also a prophecy? "Then shall the King say, 'Depart from ME, ye cursed: for I was an hungered and ye gave ME no meat: I was thirsty and ye gave ME no drink: I was a stranger and ye took ME not in: naked and ye clothed ME not: I was sick and ye visited ME not: I was in prison and ye came not unto ME: . . . Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it not unto ME.'"

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS TO LECTURE II

Note 1, p. 67.

There is, no doubt, a wide distinction between the point of view which regards the teaching of Jesus as possessing in itself a quality and a character which inevitably suggest a social Gospel, such as our modern world especially needs to hear, and the point of view which pictures the actual personality of Jesus Himself as of a definitely demagogic character, and claims for Him on this account a new loyalty from the democratic forces of to-day as the Poor Man's Champion, the Best of Socialists, the Ideal Leader of Working-men. Nevertheless, I think it may be useful to quote one or two representative passages from not unimportant modern critics to show how far in this direction —perhaps in an inevitable reaction from a too metaphysical Christology—this conception of the human Christ has been carried.

"The prophets of Israel," writes Renan, the first probably of modern biographers of Jesus to emphasise this view of the person and office of Jesus Christ, "are fiery publicists of the description we should now call socialists or anarchists. They are fanatical in their demands for social justice, and proclaim aloud that, if the world is not just, nor capable of becoming just, it were better it were destroyed—a most false and yet most fecund mode of viewing the matter; for, like all desperate doctrines, as, for instance, Russian Nihilism at the present day, it produces heroism and a great awakening of human forces. The founders of Christianity, the direct continuers of the prophets, conclude by

an incessant invocation of the end of the world, and, strange to say, they really do change it" (*Histoire du Peuple Israel*). . . .

"Jesus was in one view an anarchist, for He had no idea of civil government. That government seemed to Him purely and simply an abuse. . . . Every magistrate appeared to Him a natural enemy of the people of God. . . . A great social revolution in which rank will be overturned, in which all authority in this world will be humiliated, was His dream. . . . Pure ebionism—that is, the doctrine that the poor (*ebionim*) alone shall be saved, that the reign of the poor is approaching—was therefore the doctrine of Jesus. . . . He pardoned the rich man, but only when the rich man, in consequence of some prejudice, was disliked by society. . . . Jesus returned to Galilee, having completely lost his Jewish faith, and filled with revolutionary ardour. . . . His conception of the world was socialist, with a Galilean colouring. . . . At times we should take Him for a democratic leader desiring only the triumph of the poor and the disinherited. . . . No revolution is effected without some harshness. If Luther or the actors in the French Revolution had been compelled to observe the rules of politeness, neither the Reformation nor the Revolution would have taken place. Let us congratulate ourselves in like manner that Jesus encountered no law which punished the invectives He uttered against one class of citizens" (*Vie de Jesus*).

On the title-page of his book *Der radikale deutsche Socialismus und die christiche Geselschaft*, Rudolf Lodt, a distinguished German scholar, placed these words: "Whosoever would understand the social question and wishes to aid in solving it must have on his right hand the works of political economy, on his left those of scientific socialism, and before him must keep open the New Testament." A chapter on "The Social Doctrines of the New Testament" he sums up in these words: "With the exception of its atheism . . . the theory of Socialism cannot be opposed from the point of view of the Gospel. Its principles not only conform to the tests of the New Testament, but

contain evangelical and Divine truths." The establishment of the Evangelical Social Congress in Germany was largely due to the influence of Lodt, Stöcker, and their friends. In a paper read before this Congress in 1898 Pastor Kade gave a series of interesting opinions expressed by German working men on their conception of a Socialistic Christ. "The real Jesus seems indeed," writes Dr. Peabody, from whom I quote this testimony ('Jesus Christ and the Social Question,' p. 64), "to many of these handworkers to have been rediscovered by them, as though beneath some mediæval fresco of an unreal and mystical Christ there had been freshly laid bare the features of the Man of Nazareth." "Christ," answered one German working-man to an inquirer, "was a true friend of the working people, not in His words alone, but in His deeds. He was hated and persecuted as is the modern Socialist, and if He lived to-day He would, without doubt, be one of us." "Christ," wrote another, "was a great revolutionist; if any one now preached as He did he would be arrested." "He would have accomplished more," adds a third, "if He had given His efforts rather to economic and scientific ends than to religion." "He was a man of the common people," concludes a fourth, "who fought a hard fight for their moral and economic welfare."

"Besides the powerful influence of religion in the critical and exceptional moments of our lives, the influence of Christ would come full of strength and blessing to the working-men of England, even if they acknowledged Him, at first, in the most articulate of creeds, as the man whom they admired most. 'We used to think that Christ was a fiction of the priests; at all events not a man like us in any way, a different sort of being altogether, one who could do what He liked—so people said—and turn the world upside down if He pleased; and then we could not make Him out at all. Why, thought we, did He not turn the world upside down, and make it better if He could? It is all a mystery to us. But now, we find, He was a man after all, like us; a poor working-man who had a heart for the

poor and wanted to turn the world upside down, but could not do it at once; and He went a strange way and a long way round to do it; but He has come nearer doing it, spite of His enemies, than any man we know; and, now that we understand this, we say—though we don't understand it all or anything like it—"He is the Man for us!"' I say that if even this rudimentary feeling of gratitude and admiration for their great Leader could possess the hearts of English working-men—and this is surely not too much to expect—much would come from even this inadequate worship. And for myself, I unhesitatingly declare that I would sooner be in the position of a working-man who doubts about Heaven and Hell, and even about God, but can say of Christ, 'He is the Man for me!' than I would be in the position of the well-to-do manufacturer who is persuaded of the reality of Heaven and Hell and of the truth of all the theology of the Church of England, but can reconcile his religion with the deliberate establishment of a colossal fortune on the ruin of his fellow-creatures" (Dr. Abbott, "Kernel and the Husk," p. 334).

Finally, I may quote the following passage from the report on "Socialism" attached to the Encyclical Letter of the Anglican Bishops issued by the Lambeth Conference in 1899. It may perhaps serve to show that, in thus holding a wise balance between the Christology which ignored the social question altogether and one which finds the social question the very centre of the Gospel, the Anglican Episcopate has learnt, in these modern days, to get behind those traditions of aristocratic feudalism with which it is too often supposed to be still encrusted, and to exhibit much of that manly strength and vigour, of that directness of appeal or rebuke which characterised the representative and fraternal episcopate of the early Church.

"The primary duty of the Church, as such, and within her, of the clergy, is that of ministry to men in the things of character, conscience, and faith. In doing this she also does her greatest social duty. Character in the citizen is the first social

need ; character with its securities in a candid, enlightened, and vigorous conscience, and a strong faith in goodness and in God. The Church owes this duty to all classes alike. Nothing must be allowed to distract her from it, or needlessly to impede or prejudice her in its discharge, and this requires of the clergy, as spiritual officers, the exercise of great discretion in any attempt to bring within their sphere work of a more distinctively social kind.

"But while this cannot be too strongly said, it is not the whole truth. Character is influenced at every point by social conditions, and active conscience, in an industrial society, will look for moral guidance on industrial matters.

"Economic science does not claim to give this, its task being to inform, but not to determine, the conscience and the judgment. But we believe that Christ our Master does give such guidance by His examples and teachings, and by the present workings of His Spirit ; and therefore, under Him, Christian authority must in a measure do the same, the authority, that is, of the whole Christian body, and of an enlightened Christian opinion. This is part of the duty of a Christian society, as witnessing for Christ, and representing Him in this present world, occupied with His work of setting up the kingdom of God, under and amidst the natural conditions of human life."

Note 2, p. 68.

"Under the protection, generally, though not always effectual, of their sacred character, the Prophets were a power in the nation, often more than a match for kings and priests, and kept up, in that little corner of the earth, the antagonism of influences which is the only real security for continued progress. Religion consequently was not there, what it has been in so many other places—a consecration of all that was once established, and a barrier against further improvement. The remark of a distinguished Hebrew, M. Salvador, that the Prophets were in Church and State the equivalent of the modern liberty of the

press, gives a just but not an adequate conception of the part fulfilled in national and universal history by this great element of Jewish life; by means of which the canon of inspiration never being complete, the persons most eminent in genius and moral feeling could not only denounce and reprobate with the direct authority of the Almighty whatever appeared to them deserving of such treatment, but could give forth better and higher interpretations of the national religion, which thenceforth became part of the religion. Accordingly whoever can divest himself of the habit of reading the Bible as if it was one book, which until lately was equally inveterate in Christians and in unbelievers, sees with admiration the vast interval between the morality and religion of the Pentateuch or even of the historical books (the unmistakable work of Hebrew conservatives of the sacerdotal order), and the morality and religion of the Prophecies, a distance as wide as between these last and the Gospels. Conditions more favourable to progress could not easily exist; accordingly the Jews, instead of being stationary like other Asiatics, were, next to the Greeks, the most progressive people of antiquity, and jointly with them have been the starting-point and main propelling agency of modern cultivation" (J. S. Mill, "Representative Government," chap. ii.).

NOTE 3, p. 70.

"The value of a truly great man, as I saw it put lately, consists in his increasing the value of all mankind. It is here, truly, that the highest significance of great men lies: to have enhanced, that is, to have progressively given effect to human value—to the value of that race of men which has risen up out of the dull ground of Nature. But Jesus Christ was the first to bring the value of every human soul to light, and what He did no one can any more undo. We may take up what relation to Him we will; in the history of the past no one can refuse to recognise that it was He who raised humanity to this level. This highest estimate of a man's value is based on *a transvaluation of all values.*

(*Eine umwersung der werthe liegt dieser höchsten werth schätzung zu grunde.* German edition, p. 44.) To the man who boasts of his possessions, He says, 'Thou fool!' He confronts every one with the thought: 'Whosoever will lose his life shall gain it.' He can even say: 'He that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.' This is the transvaluation of values of which many before Him had a dim idea; of which they perceived the truth as through a veil; the redeeming power of which—that blessed mystery—they felt in advance. He was the first to give it calm, simple, and fearless expression, as though it were a truth that grew on every tree. It was just this that stamped His peculiar genius; that He gave perfectly simple expression to profound and all-important truths, as though they could not be otherwise; as though He were uttering something that was self-evident; as though He were only reminding them of what they all knew already, because it lives in the innermost part of their souls" (Harnack, "What is Christianity?" p. 67).

NOTE 4, p. 71.

In illustration of this proposition I may perhaps be allowed to quote from a sermon of my own preached in the Cambridge University pulpit more than twenty years ago. "It is the contention of those who accept the Christian philosophy of History as the true one, that the struggle for liberty in its various forms, which has in effect been the subject of the civil history of modern Europe since the time of Christ, is directly to be traced to the Christian doctrine of the intrinsic value of the human soul as such. That, it may be said, is a spiritual idea. True, but it is a spiritual idea which easily bears translation into a political one. 'The consciousness of freedom,' says the German philosopher Hegel, 'arose first in religion, in the inmost region of spirit. It is the freedom of spirit which constitutes its essence. . . . Freedom first arose among the Greeks; but they and the Romans likewise knew only that *some* men were free, not man as such. Even

Plato and Aristotle knew not this. . . . That was an idea which came into the world through Christianity, which recognised that the individual as such had an infinite worth.'

"Can any one doubt, for example, that the institution of slavery, upon which the civil order both of Greece and Rome was economically based, must have been definitely affected by the Christian doctrine of the inherent dignity of human nature, the witness, that is to say, in behalf of that which is essentially spiritual in all men, apart from all accidental distinctions of status or condition? It is true that the beneficial influence of the Christian Church upon slavery was very slow in its action—slavery lasted in Europe down to the thirteenth century—yet of the final result there surely could be no doubt, so long as both Christian slave and Christian freeman were equally taught — 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God:' 'The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God,' 'partakers of the divine nature;' 'He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth. There is no distinction of Jew or Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, for in one Spirit were ye all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.'

"Similarly, can we doubt that that conception of family life which in modern times we regard as the surest guarantee for the social happiness and moral progress of man would have been much more difficult of realisation, had not that same Christian principle of equal freedom and individual responsibility succeeded in abolishing the despotism of paternal power, which was the dominant idea in the domestic life of Græco-Roman civilisation? Or again, when we remember that social contention among the disciples, which Christ rebuked with the words—'The rulers of the Gentiles have lordship over them; and they that have authority over them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve,' does there

seem anything but what is most consonant with His spirit and with the genius of His religion, in the ready adaptation of the democratic municipal system of the proconsular towns of Asia Minor to the needs of primitive church organisation, or in the adoption of the principle of merit, rather than the principle of birth (which Jewish analogy would have suggested), in the constitution of the Christian priesthood, or in the attempt to find a settlement of doctrine by popular appeal, which gave its origin to the earliest ecclesiastical councils? And although it cannot, of course, be denied that much of the early independence of Christian character died away as the democratic tendencies of primitive church polity gradually gave way before the monarchical idea, which was the hereditary instinct of Rome, yet what impartial student of history will deny that in the crisis of the great change, when Roman civilisation was declining before the repeated attacks of the Germanic races, it was the Christian Church which went forth once more 'into that wilderness of the peoples,' and found sympathetic response in Teutonic hearts for a new reading of their own characteristic virtues of liberty and loyalty, which has formed the basis of all that is most stable in the social order of the present?

"In the history of our own country, do you forget that the political principle of representation, which is the radical doctrine of true democratic government—and remember that the union of the democratic principle with representative government is an entirely modern fact, which throws out of court all interested appeals to the failure of the democratic principle in ancient history—is directly to be traced to the action of the Christian Church in England. The Church in this country—I summarise the eloquent words in which my kinsman, the historian of our constitution, has recounted the early debt of the English nation to the English Church—'has been not only the agency by which Christianity was brought to a heathen people, a herald of spiritual blessings and glorious hope in another life; it has been not merely the tamer of cruel natures, the civiliser of the

rude, the cultivator of the waste places, the educator, the guide, and the protector, whose guardianship was the only safeguard of the woman, the child, and the slave, against the tyranny of their lord and master. The Church has been this in many other countries besides Britain, but here it has been much more. The unity of the Church in England was the pattern of the unity of the State; the cohesion of the Church was for ages the substitute for the cohesion which the divided nation was unable otherwise to realise. Strong in its own conformation, it was more than a match for the despotic rule of the early kings, and was the guardian of liberties as well as the defence of the oppressed. It was to an extraordinary degree a national Church —national in its comprehensiveness as well as its exclusiveness. Englishmen were in their lay aspect Mercians or West-Saxons; only in their ecclesiastical relations could they feel themselves fellow-countrymen and fellow-subjects. . . . The ecclesiastical and the national spirit thus growing into one another supplied something, at least, of that strong passive power which the Norman despotism was unable to break. The churches were schools and nurses of patriots, depositories of old traditional glories, and the refuge of the persecuted. The English clergy supplied the basis of the strength of Anselm, when the Norman bishops sided with the king. They trained the English people for the time when the kings should court their support and purchase their adherence by the restoration of liberties that would otherwise have been forgotten. The unity of the Church was, in the early period, the only working unity; and its liberty in the evil days that followed, the only form in which the traditions of the ancient freedom lingered. It was again to be the tie between the conquered and the conquerors; to give to the oppressed a hold on the conscience of the despot; to win new liberties, and revive the old; to incite Norman and Englishman in the resistance to tyrants; and educate the growing nation for its distant destiny as the teacher and herald of freedom to all the world.' *

* Stubbs, "Constitutional History," vol. i. p. 245.

"Nor, again, can we forget that it was at Northampton, in the year 1214, that Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, overtook King John in his futile march against the north-country barons, and endeavoured to persuade him of the justice of those demands for political liberty and self-government which six months later were embodied, under his leadership, in the great charter of liberties signed at Runnymede. And if you remember this, you ought not in justice surely to forget that it was an English Churchman who organised that great national movement for freedom which culminated in the signing of Magna Carta, refusing to separate the liberty of the Church from the liberty of the nation, but upholding that 'the cause of the people was alone worthy to be considered (I use his own phrase) as the cause of God and of the Holy Church.'

"Nor ought we to forget the influence that was exerted by the Church of Christ in this country as a director of those new forces by which society has gradually been reconstituted on an industrial rather than a military basis; how, for example, at that time in our history which is known as the Epoch of the Peasant Revolt, when the cultivation of the soil was passing into a new phase under feudal influences, and there seemed no security that the serf might not relapse once more into the condition of the slave, the Church interposed, and not only prevented any such backward tendency, but prepared the way for that complete emancipation of the serf which has resulted in his transformation into the free labourer of modern times; or how, at a later time, that same influence was exerted in fostering the growth of the early guilds and industrial corporations, which, whatever may have been their subsequent evil effects, were the necessary agents in the creation, at the epoch of the enfranchisement of towns, of that industrial property springing from labour which from that time has had a position in our social system independent of and rivalling that territorial property whose origin and constitution is purely military" ("Christ and Democracy," pp. 6, 56).

NOTE 5, p. 73.

The "pore priestes," in fact, "honeycombed the mind of the upland folk with what may be called religious socialism. By Wycliff's labours the Englishman had been introduced to the new world of the Old Testament, to the history of the human race, to the primeval garden and the young world, when the first parents of all mankind lived by simple toil, and became the ancestors of the proud noble and knight, as well as of the down-trodden serf and despised burgher. They read of the times when there was no king in Israel, when every man did that which was right in his own eyes, and sat under his own vine and his own fig-tree, none daring to make him afraid. They read how God, through his prophet, had warned Israel of the evils which would come to them when a king should reign over them, and how speedily this was verified in the conduct of the young Rehoboam, with his depraved and foolish councillors, of how woe had been predicted to the people over whom a child should rule. The God of Israel had bade his people be husbandmen and not knights and men at arms. But most of all the preacher would dwell on his own prototype, on the man of God, the wise prophet who denounced kings and princes and high priests, and by God's commission made them like a potter's vessel in the day of his wrath; or on those bold judges who were zealous even to slaying. For with this book, so old, yet so new, the peasant preacher—we are told that many learned to read when they were old that they might tell the Bible story—could stir up the souls of these peasants with the true narrative of another people, and would be sure that his way to their hearts and his confidence would be, as it always had been with the leaders of a religious revival, by entirely sympathising with their wrongs, their sufferings, and their hopes. And when they told them that the lords had determined to drag them back to their old serfdom, the preacher could discourse to them of the natural equality of men, of the fact that all kings, lords, and priests live by the fruits of

the earth, and the labour of the husbandmen, and that it would be better for them to die with arms in their hands than to be thrust back, without an effort on their part, into the shameful slavery from which they had been delivered. And as their eyes kindled, and they grasped their staves, he would tell them to keep their ears open for the news of their deliverance, that on the password being given they were at once to hie to the appointed place, when a great work would be done for God's people by his appointed servant" (Professor Rogers, "Work and Wages," p. 254).

But although, as I have said in my lecture, the essential spirit of Langland's poem is revolutionary in effect, it must not be supposed that it was intended by its author to be actively revolutionary. Nowhere in his poem has he the intention to encourage social revolution, or to rouse the flame of rebellion: very much the contrary. But his outspokenness on the vices of the time caught the ear of the populace, and his bold words were seized upon by the popular leaders of the peasant revolt, and perverted into catchwords of revolution. One of the moving spirits of that revolt was a certain John Ball, "a crazy priest of Kent," as he is called by Froissart. The socialistic nature of his teaching is summed up in the quaint lines which he appears to have taken as his text when he addressed the insurgents on Blackheath.

> "When Adam delved and Eve span
> Who was then the gentleman."

A remarkable letter by John Ball is extant, written by him to the rebels of the county of Essex, in which direct allusions to Langland's poem, and the characters of Piers the Plowman, Dowel, and Dobet occur. It runs to this effect:—

"John Schep, som tyme Seynt Marie prest of York, and now of Colchestre, greteth welle Johan Nameles, and Johan the Mullere, and Johan Cartere, and biddeth hem that they ware of gyle of borugh, and stondeth togidder in Goddis name, and biddeth *Peres* Plowman go to his werke, and chastise well Hobbe

the robber, and taketh with you Johan Trewman, and all his felaws, and no mo, and loke schappe you to on hened, and no mo.

> 'Johan the Mullere heth ygrownde smal, smal, smal,
> The Kyngis sone of Hevene shall paye for alle.
> Be ware or ye be too,
> Knoweth your frende, from your foo,
> Haveth ynowe, and seythe 'Hoo';
> And *do welle* and *bettre*, and fleth synne
> And seketh pees and holde therynne:'

And so biddeth Johan Trewman and alle his fellawes."

(*Cf.* Thomas of Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, vol. ii. p. 33, Rolls Series.)

NOTE 6, p. 76.

"'Piers Ploughman' is the best example I know of what is called popular poetry—of compositions, that is, which contain all the simpler elements of poetry, but still in solution, not crystallised around any thread of artistic purpose. In it appears at her best the Anglo-Saxon Muse, a first cousin of Poor Richard, full of proverbial wisdom, who always brings her knitting in her pocket, and seems more at home in the chimney-corner. It is genial; it plants itself firmly on human nature with its rights and wrongs; it has a surly honesty, prefers the downright to the gracious, and conceives of speech as a tool rather than a musical instrument. If we should seek for a simple word that would define it most precisely, we should not choose simplicity, but homeliness. There is more or less of this in all early poetry, to be sure; but I think it especially proper to English poets and to the most English among them, like Cowper, Crabbe, and one is tempted to add Wordsworth—where he forgets Coleridge's private lectures. In reading such poets as Langland, also, we are not to forget a certain charm of distance in the very language they use, making it unhackneyed without being alien. As it is the chief function of the poet to make the familiar novel, these

fortunate early risers of literature, who gather phrases with the dew still on them, have their poetry done for them, as it were, by their vocabulary" (J. R. Lowell, "My Study Windows," p. 195).

NOTE 7, p. 82.

Cf. Note on the "Gifts of Grace," in Lecture on "Cynewulf." The whole passage, from which the extract in the lecture is taken, occurs in passus xix. of the B text—the "Prologue to Dobest"—and is as follows :—

"And gave each man a grace · to guide himself with,
That idleness encumber him not · envy nor pride,

Divisiones graciarum sunt, etc.

Some he gave wit with words to show
Wit to win their livelihood with · as the world asketh
As preachers and priests · and prentices of law
They loyally to live · by labour of tongue
And by wit to make wise others · as Grace would them teach.
And some he learned craft · and cunning of sight
With selling and buying · their living to win,
And some he learned to labour · a leal life and a true
And some he taught to till · to ditch and to thatch;
And some to divide and divine · numbers to know.
And some to design skilfully · and colours to make,
And some to see and to say · what should befall
Both of weal and of woe · tell it as it falls out.
As astronomers to study astronomy · and philosophers wise.
And some to ride and to recover · what unrightfully was won,
He taught them to win it again · through swiftness of hand.
And to fetch it from false men · by force of law.
And some he learned to live · in a longing to go hence
In poverty and in penance · to pray for all Christians.
And all he learned to be loyal · and each craft to love others.
And forbade them all debate · that it should not be among them
'Though some be cleaner than some · see ye well,' said Grace.

'That he that useth the fairest craft · to the foulest I could have put him.
Let all remember,' said Grace · 'that grace cometh of my gift.
Look that none blame other · but love all as brethren,
And who that most mastery has · or mildest of bearing,
And crown Conscience king · and make Skill your steward,
And after Skill's counsel · clothe you and feed.
For I make Piers the Plowman · my proctor and my reeve,
And Register to receive · *redde quod debes.*
My prover and my plowman · Piers shall be on earth,
And to till Truth · a team shall he have.'
Grace gave Piers a team · four great oxen,
That one was Luke, a large beast · with a low head,
And Mark and Matthew the third · mighty beasts both,
And joined to them one John · surpassing all other,
And Grace gave Piers · of his goodness four stots.
All that his oxen ploughed · they were to harrow after.
One called Austin · and Ambrose another,
Gregory the Great Clerk · and Jerome the good:
These four the faith to teach · to follow Piers team
And harrowed in an handwhile · all Holy Scripture
With two harrows that they had · the Old and the New.
Id est vetus testamentum et novum."

(Lines 222–268.)

Note 8, p. 83.

We may place beside Langland's picture of "Jesus Christ of Heaven in poor man's apparel" Chaucer's picture of Christ as "the first stock-father of gentillnesse" in the ballad in which he tells of the man who is worthy to be called "gentle."

"The firste stock, father of gentillnesse
What man descrieth gentle for to be
Must follow his trace, and all his wittes dress
Virtue to love, and vices for to flee:
For unto virtue longeth dignitye
And not the reverse falsely dare I deem
All weare he mitre, crown or diademe.

The firste stock was full of righteousness;
True of his word, sober, piteous and free,
Clean of his ghost, and loved busyness
Against the vice of sloth in honesty;
And but his heir love virtue as did he,
He is not gentle though he rich seem,
All wear he mitre, crown or diademe.

Vyce may well be heir to old richesse
But there may no man, as men may well see
Bequeathe his heir his virtue's noblenesse
That is appropried into no degree
But to the first father in majestye,
That maketh his heires whom he deem,
All wear he mitre, crown or diademe."

Note 9, p. 83.

Of this concluding part of the poem, Professor Skeat says: "I cannot refrain from adding here my conviction, that there are not many passages in English poetry which are so sublime in their conception as this eighteenth passus. Some of the lines are rudely and quaintly expressed, but there are also many of great beauty and power, and which buoyantly express the glorious triumph of Christ" (Skeat's Introduction to "The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman," 6th ed., Clarendon Press, xxxv.). As an illustration I give the following lines from the conclusion of this passus. I have used the Crowley or B text of the poem, as edited by Professor Skeat for the Early English Text Society, 1869. I have rendered obsolete words in modern English, but have not attempted otherwise to change the structure of the lines. It may serve to give some impression of the general style and character of the poem.

"*O mors ero mors tua!*
Then came *Pilatus* with much people · sedens pro tribunali,
To see how doughty Death should do · and deem her . .

The Jews and the Justice against Jesus they were
And all their court cried on Him *Crucifige* sharpe;
Then stood him forth a robber; before Pilate, and said
This Jesus japed and despised · at our Jewish temple
To destroy it on a day · and in three days after
To build it up again · (here he stands that said it)
And yet maken it as much · in all manner of points
Both as long and as large · aloft and on ground.
'*Crucifige*,' quoth a catchpoll, I warrant Him a witch.
'*Tolle, tolle*,' quoth another and took of keen thorns,
And began of keen thorns a garland to make,
And set it sore on His head · and said in envy
'*Ave Rabbi!*' quoth that ribald and threw reeds at Him,
Nailed Him with three nails naked on the Rood,
And poison on a pole · they put up to His lips
And bade Him drink His death-ill, His days being done.
'If that Thou be skilfull · save now Thyself.
If Thou be Christ and King's son · come down from the rood
Then shall we leave Thee that life Thou lovest · and will not let
Thee die.'
'*Consummatum est*' quoth Christ, and began for to swoon
Piteously and pale · like a prisoner that dyeth,
The Lord of life and of light · then closed His eyes together.
The Day for dread withdrew · and dark became the sun.
The wall trembled and cleft in twain · and all the world shook
Dead men because of that din · came out of deep graves
And told why that tempest · so long time endured.
'For a bitter battle'—the dead body said—
'Life and death in this darkness · the one destroys the other
Shall no man know truly · who shall have the mastery
Before Sunday about sun rising,' and sank with that to earth.
Some said that He was God's son · who died so fair
Vere filius dei erat iste.
And some said He was a witch · 'good is it that we try
Whether He be dead or not dead · ere He be taken down.'
Two thieves also · suffered death that time
Upon a cross beside Christ · so was the common law.

A catchpole came forth · and cracked both their legs,
And their arms after of both the thieves,
And was no boy so bold · God's body to touch,
For He was knight and king's son · nature forgave that time
That no harlot were so hardy · to lay hands upon Him.
But there came forth a knight · with a keen spear in rest,
Named *Longeus*, as the letter telleth · and long had lost his sight.
Before Pilate and other people · in the place he waited about,
In spite of his many words · he was made that time
To take the spear in his hand · and joust with Jesus
For all the rest were unbold · who waited on horse or afoot
To touch or to handle Him · or take Him down from the Rood
But this blind bachelor then · pierced Him through the heart
The blood sprang down by the spear · and unfastened the knight's eyes.
Then fell the knight upon his knees · and cried for mercy.
'Against my will it was, Lord · to wound Thee so sore'
He sighed and said · 'sore it me athinketh,
For the deed that I have done · I place me in your grace,
Have on me pity, O just Jesus!' and right with that he wept.
Then began Faith the false Jews to upbraid
To call them caitiffs · accursed for ever
For this foul villainy · vengeance to you all
To do this blind deed on Him ybound · it was a boy's counsel
Cursed caitiff · knighthood was it never
To misdo a dead body · by day or by night
The prize hath he gotten · for all his great wound.
For your champion chevalier · chief knight of you all
Hath yielded himself recreant · right to Jesus' will
For because of this darkness · his death is avenged
And ye lordlings have been worsted · for life shall have the mastery
And your franchise which was free · hath fallen into thraldom,
And you, churls and your children, thrive shall you never
Nor have lordship in land, nor land to till
But all barren be · and live only by usury,
Which is a life that our Lord in all laws accurseth.
Now your good days are done · as Daniel prophesieth
When Christ came · 'of her kingdom the crown should cease.'
'*Cum veniat sanctus sanctorum, cessabit unxio vestra.*'"

Then follows a scene in which Mercy and Truth, and Righteousness and Peace, are represented discoursing together in the darkness on the scheme of redemption, and wondering as to the light which is seen burning afar off about the gates of hell. Then once more, with rapid transition, the poet carries us away to listen to the dialogue between the powers of darkness and the victorious Saviour, who demands admission to the infernal dungeon. Satan, Lucifer, and their peers vainly resist His voice, but the gates of hell may not prevail against Him, and amid the triumphant chorus, "Undo the gates that the Lord of might and main and all manner of virtue, the King's Son of Heaven, may come in," the gates are broken, and Christ descends into hell, offers soul for soul, life for life, death for death, and claims His own, binds Satan with chains, and brings forth the souls of them whom He liked and listed. And so the poem comes to an end.

"Many hundreds of angels harped and sang
Culpat caro, purgat caro; regnat deus dei caro.
Then piped Peace of Poetry a note,
'*Clarior est solito post maxima nebula phebus,*
Post inimicitias clarior est et amor.'
'After sharp showers,' saith Peace, 'most sheen is the sun,
Is no weather warmer · than after watery clouds;
Nor no love dearer · nor dearer friendship,
Than after war and wo · when Love and Peace be masters.
Was never war in this world · nor wickedness, so keen,
That love and his desire · did not bring them to laughing,
For Peace, through Patience, will all peril stop.'
'True it is,' said Truth, 'thou tellest truth, by Jesu,
Embrace we in covenant, and let each kiss the other.'
'And let no people,' said Peace, 'perceive that we chide,
For impossible is nothing · to Him that is Almighty.'
'Thou sayeth truth,' said Righteousness, and reverently her kissed.
Peace and Peace here! *per secula seculorum.*
Misericordia et veritas obvaverunt sibi,
Justicia et pax osculati sunt.

Truth blew her trumpet and sang · *te deum laudamus*,
And then luted Love · in a loud note,
Ecce quam bonum, et quam jocundum, etc.
Till the day dawned · these damsels danced,
And men rang the Easter bells · and right with that I waked,
And called Kit my wife, and Kalote my daughter,
'Arise ye and reverence God's Resurrection,
And creep to the Cross on knees · and kiss it for a jewel!
For God's blessed body · it was pierced for our good,
And it frighteth the evil one · for such is its might.
May no grisly ghost · glide where it shadoweth.'"

NOTE 10, p. 89.

"Nothing can illustrate more vividly the universality of the forces which in the fourteenth century were undermining the fabric of the mediæval European order than the fundamental likeness between 'The Divine Comedy' and 'The Vision of Piers Plowman.' On a superficial view, indeed, many features in the two poems stand out in vivid contrast. Writing half a century after the death of Dante, there is nothing to show that Langland had read or even heard of the work of his great predecessor. That work, with its sharp, clear-cut, and precise forms, with its constant allusions to particular places, persons, and events, offers as clear a mirror of Italian city life as the 'Vision of Piers Plowman,' so crowded with scenes of generic painting, so free from individual names and details, affords of the semi-barbarous society of feudal England. No less striking is the contrast between the persons of the two poets; the Florentine of noble birth, deeply versed in all the art and science of his age, experienced in civil affairs, master of a beautiful and harmonious form of verse; the Englishman, the descendant perhaps of small landowners, bred in the monastic school, the observer of ditchers, hucksters, and cut-purses in country lanes and London ale-houses, using as his poetical instrument the rude alliterative measure long neglected even by the Saxon minstrel.

"For all this, the two men find themselves face to face with the same social diseases; and the ideal remedy for these evils, which each suggests, proceeds from a similar method of imaginative reasoning. Both held that the corruptions of their time arose out of the confusion between the temporal and spiritual powers; both conceived that it was the duty of Church and State to pursue their separate objects in the closest alliance; each was a firm upholder of the monarchical principle; each believed that the true image of social order was revealed in the doctrines of the Catholic Church. The divergence between their ideas was due to a difference in the local circumstances to which the ideas had to be applied" (Courthope, "History of English Poetry," vol. i. p. 226).

There are many similarities of detail between the two poems, however, which, although they are doubtless, as Mr. Courthope implies, merely the result of similarity of aim and mood in the two poets, are curious to notice. The dialogues between Piers Plowman and Holy Church continually seem to echo the dialogue of Dante and Virgil. Dante, like the hero of Langland's poem, meets the seven deadly sins: he wakes and sleeps again, he dreams new dreams: he sees a mystical representation of the Gospel story. Both poets accept the legend that Trajan was saved: both refuse to admit that the heroes of the classic world were indiscriminately cast into hell. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, "the master of them that know," "hawk-eyed Cæsar," Horace, Ovid, Lucan, are placed by Dante in the first circle of Limbo. Langland also protests against the idea of Aristotle being damned.

> "For Solomon the sage that sapience taught
> God gave him grace of wit, and all his good after
> He deemed well and wisely, as holy writ telleth.
> Aristotle and he, who taught men better?
> Masters they of God's mercy, to teach men and preach
> Of their words they taught us, the wisest of their time,
> And doth all Holy Church hold them both ydamned?"

And so also in the English poem Trajan tells how he was released from hell by grace of God, and as he says—

"Withouten any bede-bidding · his boon was received
And I saved, as ye may say, without singing of masses,
By love and by learning of my living in truth.
. . . . . .
Well ought ye lords, that laws keep, this lesson to have in mind
And on Trajan's truth to think, and do truth to the people."
"Vision of Piers," B text, passus xi. 144.

Note 11, p. 92.

"This extraordinary manifestation of the religion, of the language, of the social and political notions, of the English character, of the condition, of the passions and feelings of rural and provincial England, commences, and with Chaucer and Wycliffe completes the revelation of this transition period, the reign of Edward III. Throughout its institutions, language, religious sentiment, Teutonism is now holding its first initiatory struggle with Latin Christianity. In Chaucer is heard a voice from the court, from the castle, from the city, from universal England. The orders of society live in his verse, with the truth and individuality of individual being, yet each a type of every rank, class, every religious and social condition and pursuit. And there can be no doubt that his is a voice of freedom, of more or less covert hostility to the hierarchical system, though more playful, and with a poet's genial appreciation of all which was true, healthful, and beautiful in the old faith. In Wycliffe is heard a voice from the university, from the seat of theology and scholastic philosophy, from the centre and stronghold of the hierarchy; a voice of revolt and defiance, taken up and echoed in the pulpits throughout the land, against the sacerdotal domination. In the 'Vision of Piers Plowman' is heard a voice from the wild Malvern Hills, the voice it should seem of an humble parson, or secular priest. . . . The poet is no dreamy, speculative theologian; he

acquiesces seemingly with unquestioning faith in the Creed and the usages of the Church. . . . It is in his intense absorbing moral feeling that he is beyond his age: with him outward observances are but hollow shows, mockeries, hypocrisies, without the inward power of religion. It is not so much in his keen, cutting satire on all matters of the Church as in his solemn installation of Reason and Conscience as the guides of the self-directed soul, that he is breaking the yoke of sacerdotal domination; in his constant appeal to the plainest, simplest scriptural truths, as in themselves the whole of religion, he is a stern reformer" (Dean Milman, "Latin Christianity," book xiv. chapter vii.).

LECTURE III

SHAKESPEARE

"Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask—thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,
Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base,
To the foiled searching of mortality;
And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,
Didst tread on earth unguessed at—Better so!
All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow."

—Matthew Arnold.

LECTURE III

SHAKESPEARE

"My beloved had withdrawn Himself, and was gone. . . . I sought Him but I could not find Him; I called Him but He gave me no answer."

—CANTICLES v. 6.

"It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is Truth."

—1 JOHN v. 6.

THE witness of the poetry of the Renaissance to the spirit of Christianity, if not directly to the personality of Jesus Christ, ought to be found, one would suppose, in the literature of sixteenth-century England. And yet I am sure that in naming Shakespeare as the representative of that witness you will think that my choice of subject to-day needs some justification.

Shakespeare was undeniably the most potent voice, the most expressive voice, of Elizabethan England, the poet most representative of that mental exaltation of the English people, which had been aroused by the great events of those most spacious times.[1] But it would be quite natural to doubt whether Shakespeare was the best representative, among the poets of his time, of the religion of England.

I have said in a former lecture—quoting in effect a well-known passage in Shelley's "Defence of Poetry"—

that "the poets even more than the theologians are the representative men of their own age, the most prophetic men of their own time." Yet I can quite understand that, when I propose to take Shakespeare as England's representative poet for my purpose to-day, some such objections as these should be put to me.

Can you speak, even in the Shelley sense, of Shakespeare as a national prophet? Can you speak, indeed, in any representative sense at all, of Shakespeare as even a religious man, a good man? It is true, of course, we are well aware, that in the plays of Shakespeare there is much allusion to religious institutions and to religious traditions. Prominent among his *dramatis personæ* are the official representatives of religion—monks and friars, bishops and cardinals. In his poetry there is even mention of saints, although none, at least of the male sex, are ever presented to us in person. Biblical ideas, biblical phrases are quite common, for Shakespeare certainly knew his Bible. It did not need the book of painful quotation by Bishop Wordsworth of St. Andrews to prove that. Any pupil of the Stratford Grammar School of his day, would probably show a similar familiarity with the words of Scripture. But there is no real sense of religion in all this, no expression at anyrate of any deep personal religious conviction. Shakespeare does not even put the expression of such conviction into the mouths of his characters. His clergy, for example, if they have any wisdom at all, have an earthly, not a spiritual wisdom. Friar Lawrence culls his herbs like a more benevolent Medea. Cardinal Wolsey flings away ambition with a profoundly Pagan despair. Juliet goes to shrift, it is true, but it is to

arrange her love affairs. Ophelia ought to go to a nunnery to forget hers. Hamlet sees a true ghost—the representative apparently of hidden ultimate power, a messenger of divine justice—but he is so little Christian that shortly after he is ready to die with a sacred duty still consciously undone. And so on, and so on.

Now, in answer to objections such as these, let me say this.

And in the first place let me read to you this passage from a thoughtful writer of the last generation:—

"If," says the late Mr. Walter Bagehot[2]—"if the underlying and almighty essence of this world be good, then it is likely that the writer who most deeply approached to that essence will be himself good. There is a religion of week-days as well as of Sundays, of 'cakes and ale'* as well as of pews and altar-cloths. This England lay before Shakespeare as it lies before us all, with its green fields and its long hedgerows, and its many trees, and its great towns and its endless hamlets, and its motley society, and its long history and its bold exploits, and its gathering power, and he saw that they were good. To him, perhaps, more than any one else, has it been given to see that they were a great unity, a great religious object; that if you could only descend to the inner life, to the deep things, to the secret principles of its noble vigour, to the essence of character, to what we know of Hamlet and seem to fancy of Ophelia, we might, so far as we are capable of so doing, understand the nature which God has made. Let us then think of him,

* "Twelfth Night," iii. 2.

not as a teacher of dry dogmas, or a sayer of hard sayings, but as

> 'A priest to us all
> Of the wonder and bloom of the world' *—

a teacher of the hearts of men and women: one from whom may be learned something of that inmost principle that ever modulates—

> 'With murmurs of the air,
> And motions of the forest and the sea,
> And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
> Of night and day and the deep heart of man.'" †

Mr. Bagehot, I think, is right. Shakespeare was not a prophet or a preacher, of course, in the ordinary sense, but perhaps he was something better and higher. He rises above mere morals, and preaches to us, prophesies to us, of life. He gives us men and women to know, instead of maxims or proverbs.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, remember, is not theology only, not morality only, but the story of a Personality, of a Life; of a Personality and a Life in which all men can see the perfection of human character, the divinity of forgiveness, of perpetual mercy, of constant patience, of everlasting gentleness, the stainless purity of thought and motive, the clear-sighted perception of a soul of goodness even in things evil, the unfailing sense of the equal providence of justice, the royalty of witness to the sovereignty of truth. Now is there any prophet of our modern dispensation who knew these things

* Matthew Arnold, "Youth of Nature."
† Shelley, "Alastor."

better, or could prophesy of them more vividly through life, through "words made flesh," than did Shakespeare?

In an evil day too, remember, Shakespeare prophesied; he taught the most gracious and gentle precepts—too good, I fancy, almost to have been listened to if men had quite known what they were receiving. There are some things in Shakespeare I almost think that he might have been burnt for had he been a theologian, just as certainly that there are things about politics, about civil liberty, which, had he been a politician, would have brought him to the block.

But God made him a player, and neither of these other things. And so he could teach a message to his age which it much needed—lessons of peace, gentleness, mercy, patience, long-suffering, tolerance. Shakespeare was no priest, it is true; he waved no censer, yet who can tell, when we consider the thousands of souls who have learnt the lessons of Shakespeare, how much he has done to humanise, and therefore to Christianise, mankind? His doctrine may not be preached to men in set dogma and maxim. It may rather perhaps distil as dew. Yet many a man who has read the "Merchant of Venice," or pondered over that sad drama of a sinful soul in "Macbeth," or in "King Lear," has been startled and terrified at the thought that the folly of the king and the ingratitude of his daughters are no mere accidents in an evil world; or who has watched in "Hamlet" that terrible attempt of the wicked king to pray; or who in "Measure for Measure" has grasped the key to that marvellously sad, but most moral story, in the lines—

> "He who the sword of Heaven would bear
> Must be holy as severe"—

has heard sermons more conscience-piercing probably than any homilies of the pulpit, lessons, I venture to think, as poignant and as tender as any that have fallen on the world since the days of the apostles.[3]

There is, moreover, a further consideration which I would venture to advance in answer to those who find it difficult to accept Shakespeare as in any sense a fair representative of the religious attitude of Elizabethan Englishmen towards Christ and Christianity. And it is this : I will put it in the form of a question to the students of Elizabethan Church history;—I may take it for granted that such student will be familiar with the distinctive notes of modern English Churchmanship—(1) the personal devotion of the individual soul to Jesus Christ as the central object of worship and as the central motive of Deity; (2) the sober standard of Christian character as governed by a traditional and religious reverence for the heroes of faith, the saints of God ; (3) the ideal life of a faith which can only be lived in its fulness in a society—in a Church, of which Christ is the only and the immortal Head ;—and I will ask such student where, in the writings of the prominent theologians of the sixteenth century in England, do you find the expression of these distinctive notes?

You will, I think, find them with difficulty. In the opening scenes of the Reformation drama you will, it is true, find them in the sayings of men like Dean Colet and Grocyn, like Sir Thomas More and Erasmus.

"Gracious God!" exclaims Colet in one of his sermons, "here may one perceive how clean and how

pure he that professes Christ ought to be; how inwardly and thoroughly washed; how white, how shining, how utterly without blemish and spot: in fine, how perfected and fitted, according to his measure, with Christ Himself." You will find also the symbol of this personal devotion to Christ in the image of "the child Jesus" which the Dean caused to be placed in his S. Paul's School over the headmaster's desk, with the motto, "Hear ye Him!" You will find more than a hint of the same distinctive note in such words as these of Erasmus: "If the footprints of Christ are anywhere shown to us, we kneel down and adore. Why do we not rather venerate the living and breathing picture of Him in these books (of His Gospel)? If the vesture of Christ be exhibited, where will we not go to kiss it? Yet were His whole wardrobe exhibited, nothing could represent Christ more vividly and truly than these evangelical writings. Statues of wood and stone we decorate with gold and gems for the love of Christ. They only profess to give us the form of His body; these books present us with a living image of His most holy mind. Were we to have seen Him with our own eyes, we should not have so intimate a knowledge as they give of Christ—speaking, healing, dying, rising again, as it were, in our own actual presence. . . . The sun itself is not more common and open to all than the teaching of Christ. . . . The mysteries of kings it may be safe to conceal, but Christ wished His mysteries to be published as openly as possible. . . . I wish that even the weakest woman should read the Gospels. . . . I long that the husbandman should sing portions of them as he follows the plough;

that the weaver should hum them to the tune of his shuttle; that the traveller should beguile with their stories the tedium of his journey."

And you will find the same distinctive spirit shining forth again half a century later, when the polemics in the early Reformation period are somewhat abating their fury, in the "Devotions" of the saintly Bishop Andrews, and later again, and more completely, in the "Temple" of George Herbert, in such words as these:—

> "Lord, when the sense of Thy sweet grace
> Sends up my soul to seek Thy face,
> Thy blessed eyes breed such desire,
> I die in Love's delicious fire.
> O Love, I am Thy sacrifice:
> Be still triumphant, blessed eyes!
> Still shine on me, fair suns, that I
> Still may behold, though still I die.
> . . . .
> For while Thou sweetly slayest me,
> Dead to myself I live in Thee."

But in the intervening years you will find the expression of the same spirit with difficulty in the writings of the protagonists of the English Reformation settlement—Parker, Jewel, Grindal, Whitgift, or even Hooker. "My beloved hath withdrawn Himself and is gone. . . . I sought Him, but I could not find Him. I called Him, but He gave me no answer."

Why is this? Because, surely, in the first place, the natural outcome of an age of religious controversy is the decay of reverence and of godly fear. When the deepest mysteries of the faith become the subject of theological contention, are debated, as it were, at every street corner;

when Church life comes to mean the balance of parties, compromises this way and that according to the exigencies of times and seasons; when even the greatest intellect, the most philosophic thinker of the Reformed English Church is driven to public and unseemly dispute with his afternoon lecturer at the Temple Church, so that, in Fuller's phrase, "the pulpit spake pure Canterbury in the morning and Geneva in the afternoon," and only recovers spirituality, and that large good sense which is the special greatness of his "Ecclesiastical Polity," by retreat to the solitude of a country parsonage; it is not to be wondered at that the object of such ceaseless and embittered theological disputing should cease to be an object of worship. The Spirit of Christ does not long abide with the spirit of contention. For in the strife of party and school even theologians are apt to forget the calm and generous presence of Him who is the Head and the Heart of the Church. And, undoubtedly, the official theology of Elizabethan England does appear to be based upon a Christianity from which the Personality of Christ Himself seems to have almost vanished.[4]

Is it surprising, therefore, that Shakespeare, who, though he was a poet, was by profession a play-actor and not a theologian, should prefer to stand aloof from such religion? From what we know of him as a man, it is likely, I think, that he would do that. To be religious in his day had already begun to mean to be puritanical; and he had an objection, I fancy, to grim people. Anyway, he would have enjoyed the society of Mercutio certainly far better than that of the afternoon

lecturer at the Temple Church. I suspect that "Via, Goodman Dull!" would have been his probable feeling at the advent of Mr. Travers, though he was far too gentle a soul, of course, to have put that greeting into words. "We have lookt so long," said even puritan John Milton, "at the blaze that Zwinglius and Calvin have beaconed to us that we have become stark-blind." And Shakespeare certainly was already, as an artist, "stark-blind" to the things of Puritan religion on its narrower and official side. He could know nothing, of course, as Milton did afterwards, of the grandeur of Puritanism, of its invigorating virtues, of its ennobling life, of its stern morality, of its high seriousness, of its intense conviction of the omnipotence of God and the littleness of man. For Shakespeare was steeped in the spirit of the Renaissance. He was, indeed, as much the central figure of English Renaissance as Leonardo da Vinci was of Italian. The passionate and romantic embroideries of life, its beauty and its charm, which it was the delight of a Renaissance poet to trace, would to Shakespeare seem to have nothing to do with those painful controversies and contentions which made the temper of the Puritan so acrid and so sad. In the divorce, therefore, between the fulness of life, which is the distinctive note of the Renaissance, and the depth and unity of faith which is the distinctive note of the Reformation, there could be little doubt as to which side a man of imagination instinctively would attach himself.

It is not wonderful, therefore, I think, that religion, in the popular sense, should not have been congenial to Shakespeare's mind, and, in the narrower and official

sense, should have been practically overlooked in his plays, which are accordingly confined to a representation of life in its purely secular aspect. At the same time I think it is fair to say that, if the Christian in Shakespeare was not the real man, we should have expected, at least, that the Pagan would have spoken more frankly. And certainly, apart from this, the purity and high tone of Shakespeare as compared with his contemporary dramatists would be little short of marvellous.[5]

But whatever may have been Shakespeare's relations with the official religion of his day, religion in its deepest sense is never absent from his world.

> "There's a divinity doth shape our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will"

is of the very essence of his creed. But the Divinity is the Divinity of moral law, supreme throughout the universe. The ultimate power, in fact, in his tragic world is the power of moral order. That supremacy is acknowledged by Shakespeare in the minutest as well as in the greatest concerns of human life. The faithful witness of conscience, "the dagger of the mind," an actual sense of sin, an actual need for righteousness conceived as belonging to the inner self of each human being, self-mastery, justice, fraternity, courtesy, constancy—these are all prime elements in the ideal human character as interpreted by Shakespeare. Character, indeed, with him is the one thing which is eternal. It is character, not circumstance, which determines destiny. No inexorable Fate broods over the

actions of men and women in Shakespeare's plays as in the great tragedies of ancient Greece. The only fatality which rules in Shakespearean drama is the fatality of character, and even then it is a fatality which is entirely consonant with the freedom of the human will. A single act, the act of a single day, the act of a single hour, may fix the fate of an entire life, but in that day or hour the man was free, and the sole arbiter of his own destiny.

The drama of Shakespeare, in one word, is the drama of individuality.

And it is just here in his interpretation of the principle of individuality, of individual freedom, which is, of course, directly traceable to the Christian doctrine of the intrinsic value of the human soul as such, and which also is the *idée mère* of our modern civilisation, that Shakespeare becomes the prophet of Christian truth to his age, and a witness, therefore, to Christ and Christianity.

Those of you who may be familiar with the writings of the Italian reformer Mazzini, may perhaps remember how powerfully, in his essay on the Historical Drama (published almost a century ago in the Antologia of Florence), he has commented on this conception of Shakespeare as the prophet of his epoch, the interpreter of that religious principle which has proved itself the mother idea ruling the social development of modern England up to our own day.[6]

"Starting," Mazzini said, "from a conception of human life founded upon human individuality alone,

it was impossible that man should reach the idea of God as the supreme Educator of Humanity." For the life of humanity, in his thought, was the incarnation of a Divine idea of social perfectibility. That life was built up like those Eastern pyramids of which we read, to which each passing traveller added a stone. Each man, each people, each age, had its own special gift with which to enrich the patrimony of the race. From labour to labour, from belief to belief, the design of God was gradually being worked out. It was, however, his contention, that when the vital principle of any age had attained its fullest development and become identified with the progress of civilisation, it gave way to another more in accordance with the wants of the age, one more fitted to guide mankind through a further stage of progress. The centre of faith was thus always moving one degree onwards. The intellectual hypothesis of one age became the practical principle of the next. But that principle was only then verified in men's actions when a new hypothesis was dawning upon their thoughts. Each age had its own dogma to propound, but the principle involved in that dogma was not reduced finally to practice until the human intellect was already absorbed with the thought of its successor. It was by the light of the coming dogma that men were enabled practically to execute the duties commanded by the dogma of the foregone age.

Thus, for example, the principle of individuality which was, in Mazzini's idea, the intellectual hypothesis of the pre-Reformation age, has been in effect the working principle of the post-Reformation centuries. Alike,

that is to say, in the two great transformations of society, the one spiritual and ecclesiastical, the other economic and industrial, which belong respectively to the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, has that principle been the systematic organ of emancipation. But it has equally been the chief directing force of the development of national character. And I cannot help thinking that Mazzini is right when he contends, that if you would learn the secret of that development, you can find it nowhere in English literature more clearly indicated than in the dramas of Shakespeare.

The dramas of Shakespeare, in fact, have summed up and expressed for Englishmen the great emancipating forces which have moulded the national character more completely than could have been done by the greatest historian. Shakespeare, it may be truly said, came into the world to teach this one truth above all others, a truth of the profoundest social import, a truth which needed telling—that every man and woman born into the world differs from every other man and woman. He was, in fact, the prophet of individuality. He took the individual human soul for his province; and that civilised human soul, which hitherto had been only systematically studied in the confessional, became for Shakespeare the very woof and warp of that dramatic canvas upon which his emancipated art revealed to the world *sub specie æternitatis* the inner secrets of human nature. In his dramatic exposition of human life the individual is everything to Shakespeare. In the art of depicting individual character he is without a rival. He does not laboriously copy, he casts the whole in

a single mould. He does not evoke, he creates. His personages live and move as if they had just come forth from the hand of God. The human being in Shakespeare is not defined by its most prominent faculty, nor is life defined by its most potent manifestation. The beings themselves—life itself—are brought before us in his plays with a reality, with a truth, with a perfection, the highest, I suppose, ever attained by man. It is true that we do not find in Shakespeare any consciousness of the fact that in thus emphasising in his method of dramatic portraiture this principle of individuality—which, by the way, has been the strong point of English art ever since—he was also emphasising the inspiring motive of the social evolution of the English nation during the next three centuries. The liberty of the individual man to be himself—individual liberty as the one condition of individual development, this was sufficient for Shakespeare. It did not apparently occur to him to work out the principle in relation to social evolution—in relation, for example, to practical politics. That was to be the combined problem of eighteenth-century Rationalism and of early nineteenth-century Romanticism. Indeed, it has been argued by some critics, from certain indications in the plays (the Jack Cade scenes, for example, in "2 Henry VI."), that Shakespeare had no sympathy with political liberty or with democratic ideas: had, indeed, a very wholesome disdain of the many-headed monster.[7] And it is true, no doubt, that Shakespeare was not a modern democrat. But it was equally true that there was not a modern democracy in "the spacious days of great Elizabeth." In the Tudor

period the representative people had not emerged. Representative Democracy, in fact, is an entirely modern institution, which throws out of court, therefore, all interested appeals to the sad fate of democratic, so-called, institutions in old days. And there are certainly those among Shakespearean students (Werner, for example, in his *Jahrbuch*) who discover in the author of "Hamlet" and "King Lear" a thinker in the foremost ranks of modern and patriotic spirits; a forerunner of the struggle for freedom in which England was to engage first among the nations of Europe. But Shakespeare was too human, and too permanent—shall we say, too "eternal"?—to be a party politician. "A plague on both your houses!" is his nearest to a political cry. A poet of the nineteenth century, of course, who had no care for political theories and philosophies of history, would show himself to be lacking in that very sympathy with humanity which made Shakespeare what he was. But Shakespeare himself dealt with men, not with philosophical ideas. He has no abstract political principles to apply, even in his story of the contest of Lancaster and York. And the nearest to a political principle you can get anywhere in Shakespeare, is the consciousness of his faith in the divine right of the kingliest nature to be king.

I cannot pursue the argument further. It will be sufficient for the present to remember that, in the light of the Christian doctrine of the intrinsic value of the human soul as such, the stuff of conscience is immeasurably great, and that Shakespeare's new emphasis on the importance of the individual man and woman, gave

to the Christian principle of Individuality a root as deep as the bottom of things, and endowed it with a sovereign authority in history. Let us hope, for the future stability of both Church and State in England, that we shall all remember that the wild rose of Democracy must not forget her kinship with the mystic rose of "the companions of the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."

Let us pass to another consideration.

I am sure that you must all be familiar with that beautiful passage in Mr. Ruskin's "Sesame and Lilies," in which that great writer calls attention to the fact that, in the strict sense of the word, Shakespeare has no heroes—only heroines.[8] "There is not one entirely heroic figure," Mr. Ruskin says, "in all his plays, except the slight sketch of Henry V. . . . whereas there is hardly a play that has not a perfect woman in it, steadfast in grave hope and errorless purpose: Cordelia, Desdemona, Isabella, Hermione, Imogen, Queen Katharine, Perdita, Sylvia, Viola, Rosalind, Helena, and last and perhaps loveliest, Virgilia, are all faultless, conceived in the highest heroic type of humanity."

What is the explanation of this? Why is it that Shakespeare's women are such divine creations, sacred to the deepest of Christian virtues, love, innocence, resignation, constancy?

But before I answer that question, let me point a personal lesson which I think Mr. Ruskin, in his characterisation, himself misses. I do not think that Mr. Ruskin is quite right, that is to say, in the lesson which

he would seem to draw from the heroic character of Shakespeare's women. It is not, I think, that women are really perfect in character, as he suggests—"infallibly faithful and wise counsellors—incorruptibly just and pure examples—strong always to sanctify, even when they cannot save"—in a way which is not possible to men. But the lesson is surely this—*that Shakespeare himself evidently thought them so.* That, I think, is the point to be grasped. Shakespeare kept true through his whole life to the youthful, the chivalric ideal of a good woman, expressed in words which, in "Measure for Measure," he puts into the mouth of the jesting Lucio, describing Isabella—in her virginal strength and self-possessed dignity, perhaps the noblest of all the heroines of the plays :—

> "I hold you as a thing enskyed and sainted ;
> By your renouncement an immortal spirit,
> And to be talked with in sincerity,
> As with a saint."

Ah, young men! I tell you that what is worth remembering about this reverence of Shakespeare for women, which surrounds them for him to the end of his days—it is in "The Winter's Tale," one of his latest plays, that he draws for us the gracious simplicity, the wifely perfection of Hermione, and in "The Tempest," the latest of his plays, the peerless purity, the maiden sweetness of the most admired Miranda—with an almost divine light and glamour, is that it is just what the ordinary man of the world too often despises as the mistake of his inexperienced youth. And yet who was more "the man of the world" than Shakespeare? His knowledge

of human nature was immense, if not infallible, and in no sense did he avoid the world and its temptations. He lived, too, in the midst of London town life, of theatrical life, such as we know it to have been in Elizabeth's day, coarse, corrupt, feculent. As a playwright, too, and an artist he had specially before him the example of the superb but vicious genius of Marlowe, and yet he preserved in his heart the feeling —natural, I venture to assert, to uncorrupted youth— of the divinity and sacredness of womanhood, so that in his latest, as in his earliest plays, his strong spirit, so keen to detect human weakness and sin, pays woman the involuntary homage of laying aside, in face of her excellence, its weapon of criticism. It is Iago, who is nothing if not critical, who dares to doubt of Desdemona's truth. He, it is true, as Mrs. Jameson has said in her "Characteristics of Women," "would have bedevilled an angel." Alas! there are men in our own day who, with none of Iago's wickedness, in either intention or act, are still stained by the evil spirit of the world, and in their inmost thought dare to judge as he did of the virtue of woman. But such a man was not Shakespeare. He, at fifty years of age, still feels in presence of his heroines like a lover before his first love.[9]

Seriously, then, do I beg you to ponder this fact, that the reverence for woman which too many men affect to lose in their teens, was retained by the "myriad-minded" Shakespeare to the end of his days.

And the explanation of it?

Is it not just this, that Shakespeare, receiving perhaps unconsciously, as his natural heritage, from the

genius of mediæval England that conception of womanhood which came to the poets of the Middle Age—you see it perhaps especially in Chaucer — through their apotheosis of woman expressed in the worship of the blessed Virgin, trusted to his own strong inspiration, to the fineness of his insight into human character, to the gentle and chivalrous instincts of his own wholesome nature, in his creation of the noble women of his plays.

It is not possible of course to mark out with absolute precision the chronology of a moral ideal. But there can be little question, I think, that in the history of European civilisation the change of ideal with regard to the personality of woman synchronises with the change from Pagan to Christian influences, and that the sentiment in regard to her position is ennobled and broadened with ever advance to clearer apprehension as the years go on, of the meaning of the sacramental character of Christian marriage.

One must not, perhaps, make too much of this point —I have already dwelt upon it in a previous lecture; but at least it is to the honour of Shakespeare's witness to the Christian elements of national character, that in the long history of the English poetic ideals of womanhood—from the Juliana of Cynewulf, the typical heroine of our northern forbears, generous and gentle and winning, but firm of character, resolute of will, royal of bearing, down to Wordsworth's immortal picture of

> "A perfect woman, nobly planned,
> To warn, to comfort, and command,
> And yet a spirit still, and bright
> With something of an angel light,"

there is no poet in the brilliant roll who has wrought more nobly, more Christianly, than Shakespeare, in fashioning that ideal which I doubt not is enshrined in all our hearts to-day.

I must hasten to a conclusion. That in doing so I must pass by the great moral lessons of Shakespeare's tragedies—"Hamlet," "Othello," "King Lear," "Macbeth"—I the less regret in that I trust that all of you who care for these things will be reading shortly the splendid lectures on "Shakespearean Tragedy" by the Professor of Poetry in the sister University.[10]

One further thought and lesson before I end. You remember the character of Prospero in "The Tempest." Did it ever strike you to identify that great enchanter with Shakespeare himself in the closing years of life? The thought is surely a fruitful one. For "The Tempest," the latest of all his plays, is an ideal allegory of human life, with parabolic undermeanings, so it seems to me, everywhere, in every line of it, but with all its lessons unforced, unsophisticated, illusive, unperceived indeed by those whose eyes are closed, whose ears are dull of hearing; the scene of it nowhere, anywhere, for it is in the Fortunate Island of the soul of man, that vexed land of imagination hung between the upper and the nether world; the characters of it, types, abstractions—woman, youth, the people—all of them more or less victims of illusion, all of them losing their way in this enchanted realm of life, except only Prospero, the great mage, absolute lord of the island, who could summon to his service at a moment's notice every shape of merriment or of passion, every figure in the great tragi-comedy of

life, and who, being none other than Shakespeare himself, "not one but all mankind's epitome," could run easily through the whole scale of human passion and thought from "Nature's woodnotes wild," or the homely commonplaces of existence, the chimney-corner wisdom of Master Goodman Dull, to the transcendental subtleties of—

> "No, Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change;
> The Pyramids built up with newer light
> To me are nothing novel, nothing strange,—
> They are but dressings of a former sight."

It is not only because Prospero was a great enchanter, about to break his magic staff, "to drown his book deeper than ever plummet sounded," to dismiss his "airy spirits," and to return to the practical service of the State that we identify the Philosopher Duke with the Poet Prophet. It is rather because the temper of Prospero is the temper of Shakespeare in those last days, when he came back to the dear old home at Stratford, to its sweetest, simplest, homeliest things, finding the daily life of that little place, the men and women there, the Nature all around, the green fields, the sweet hedgerow flowers, the quiet woods, the softly flowing Avon, good enough for him; despising nothing as common or unclean; curious of all things and of all men, but never scornful, never contemptuous; humorous, sympathetic, tolerant; his wide-viewing mind at last looking back from the altitudes of thought to which he had attained, on all the pageantry of the lower world which he had abandoned through a strange, pathetic, ideal light.

"Our revels now are ended: these our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve:
And like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep. Sir, I am vex'd;
Bear with my weakness: my old brain is troubled.
Be not disturbed with my infirmity:
If you be pleased, retire into my cell,
And there repose: a turn or two I'll walk
To still my beating mind."

And so he ends—Prospero or Shakespeare. In the epilogue to the play you have the keynote given of this self-mastered character, this self-possessed grandeur of a completely disciplined will, which is common to both, to Shakespeare as to Prospero—forgiveness and freedom.

"And my ending is despair
Unless I be relieved by prayer
Which pierces so that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults."

And so, too, I will end—how better?—with those lessons of freedom and forgiveness: the true freedom which only comes from service, the true pardon which only comes to those who forgive, because they have been forgiven.

Have we learnt those lessons? The root of all true religion, believe me, lies there. What do we know of the true "service which is perfect freedom"? What is

our definition of life? How do we conceive of it to ourselves? Is it—do we think—as Shakespeare has elsewhere said, "a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing"? or is it a mission of service to our fellows for Christ's sake? God grant that we can answer, "Life means service—life means mission."

> "O gentlemen, the time of life is short,
> To spend that shortness basely were too long
> If life did ride upon a dial's point
> Still ending with the arrival of an hour."

And the lesson of pardon, have we made that, too, ours? "The tongues of dying men," our poet says, "enforce attention like deep harmony." From the cross of Jesus comes His dying words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" We have all learnt —God grant it—to recognise the ethical beauty of the spirit of forgiveness. Do we equally acknowledge its moral power, its redeeming power? "Father, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." So daily we pray. But my brothers, my sisters, do we truly realise this power of forgiveness, this social power of remitting or retaining sins, this priestly power of humanity? May we not learn something of it from Shakespeare? Who will teach us more unerringly than he of that unstrained quality of mercy, that earthly and yet spiritual power of free forgiveness "which then shows likest God's when mercy seasons justice"?

Ah, believe me, just so far as we exercise that absolving power lovingly and wisely in our lives, and with our lips we help men away from sin: just so far as we

do not exercise it, or exercise it wrongly, we drive men into sin. "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sin." So He spake who first consciously used this neglected law of free forgiveness as a new, vivifying, contagious, redemptive power over the souls of men and exalted it as the very key to that temple which is built up no otherwise than out of the souls of men, which we call His Church. But He also, the great Master of all spiritual secrets, bequeathed, we must never forget it, that new power to His Church, yea, to all the members of His royal priesthood who, consciously or unconsciously, were imbued with His spirit. The "angels and ministers of His grace" are many and varied. Can we then deny some portion at least of that mystical faculty to him who saw deeper down than other sons of men to the ultimate springs of human conduct, laying them bare in unexpected ways, who was quick and powerful as any two-edged sword to pierce the very heart and marrow of the human conscience and will, and thus finally out of spiritual discord brought harmony, and out of tragic issues reconciliation, that "word over all beautiful as the sky"?

Shakespeare was no priest, it is true, in the ecclesiastical sense. He claimed no absolving power as a technical or professional gift. But just as in regard to that other lesson of freedom, Shakespeare does seem to give to each one of us "courage and energy and strength to dedicate ourselves and our work to that service, to that mission—whatever it may be—which life has revealed to us as best and highest and most real:" so also, with regard to this other lesson of the redemptive power

of a priestly humanity, this social force of true forgiveness, I do not hesitate to say that Shakespeare is a noble witness to the redeeming Christ, because in his censer there burns truly and fragrantly and steadily

> "Such incense as of right belongs
> To the true shrine
> Where stands the Healer of all wrongs
> In light divine."

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS TO LECTURE III

Note 1, p. 123.

"The historical examination of Shakespeare's plays explains why they were necessarily the product of the English mind, and of a particular period in the life of the English nation. It was the aim of Shakespeare not only 'to hold the mirror up to nature,' but to show 'the age and body of the time his form and pressure'; his poetical design was at once universal and particular. Two causes external to himself made his dramas possible; the state of English society as contrasted with that of other nations in Europe, and the continuity of tradition on the English stage. England alone presented such social conditions at the close of the sixteenth century as allowed all the great contemporary tendencies of human action to be reflected in the drama. She alone, while preserving the catholic and feudal foundations of society, had given full play to the new impulses of life, derived on the one side from the Renaissance in Italy, on the other from the Reformation in Germany. Like France and Spain, she had developed her institutions round the central principle of Monarchy; but while she had encouraged every form of enterprise both in speculation and action, she had not obliterated the old traditions of honour and chivalry. Nowhere else could the dramatist find such matter for stirring political situations as in the chronicle histories of England since the reign of King John; nowhere else could he study with equal advantage the effects produced on the lives of men by the contending forces of materialism and religion, or watch so well the struggles of

sensuality and ambition, checked by conscience on the one hand, and the sense of vanity on the other" (Courthope, "History of English Poetry," vol. iv. p. 198).

NOTE 2, p. 125.

"Literary Studies," by Walter Bagehot, vol. i. p. 84. To this testimony of Bagehot I should like to add the following passage from Professor Dowden's "Mind and Art of Shakespeare." It occurs towards the close of his book, in a passing criticism of the sonnets, at p. 396. No one has written, I venture to say, with deeper insight than Dr. Dowden of the ethical significance of Shakespearean drama.

"In the sonnets we recognise three things—that Shakespeare was capable of measureless personal devotion; that he was tenderly sensitive, sensitive above all to every diminution or alteration of that love his heart so eagerly craved; and that when wronged, although he suffered anguish, he transcended his private injury, and learned to forgive. There are lovers of Shakespeare so jealous of his honour that they are unable to suppose that any grave moral flaw could have impaired the nobility of his life and manhood. Shakespeare, as he is discovered in his poems and his plays, appears rather to have been a man who by strenuous effort, and by the aid of the good powers of the world, was saved, so as by fire. Before Shakespeare zealots demand our attention to ingenious theories, which help us to credit the immaculateness of Shakespeare's life, let them prove to us that his writings never offend. When they have shown that Shakespeare's poetry possesses the proud virginity of Milton's poetry, they may go on to show that Shakespeare's youth was devoted, like the youth of Milton, to an ideal of moral elevation and purity. When we have been convinced that the same moral and spiritual temper which gave rise to the 'Comus' gave rise to the 'Venus and Adonis,' we shall think it probable that Shakespeare could have uttered the proud words about his unspotted life that Milton uttered.

"Assuredly the inference from Shakespeare's writings is not that he held himself with virginal strength and pride remote from the blameful pleasures of the world. What no reader will find anywhere in the plays or poems of Shakespeare is a cold-blooded, hard, or selfish line; all is warm, sensitive, vital, radiant with delight, or a-thrill with pain. And what we may dare to affirm of Shakespeare's life is that, whatever its sins may have been, they were not hard, selfish, deliberate, cold-blooded sins. The errors of his heart originated in his sensitiveness, in his imagination (not at first inured to the hardness of fidelity to the fact), in his quick consciousness of existence, and in the self-abounding devotion of his heart. There are some noble lines by Chapman, in which he pictures to himself the life of great energy, enthusiasms, and passions which for ever stands upon the edge of utmost danger, and yet for ever remains in absolute security.

> 'Give me the spirit that on this life's rough sea
> Loves to have his sails filled with a lusty wind
> Even till his sail-yards tremble, his masts crack,
> And his raft ship run on her side so low
> That she drinks water, and her keel ploughs air;
> There is no danger to a man that knows
> What life and death is—there's not any law
> Exceeds his knowledge; neither is it lawful
> That he should stoop to any other law.'

"Such a master-spirit pressing forward under strained canvas was Shakespeare. If the ship dipped and drank water, she rose again, and at length we behold her within view of her haven, sailing under a large calm wind, not without tokens of stress of weather, but if battered, yet unbroken by the waves. . . . The Shakespeare whom we discern in the sonnets had certainly not attained the broad mastery of life which the Stratford bust asserts to have been Shakespeare's in his closing years. . . . Besides, life was not exhausted. The ship righted itself, and went ploughing forward across a broad sea. Shakespeare found ever

more and more in life to afford adequate sustenance for man's highest needs of intellect and of heart. Life became ever more encircled with presences of beauty, of goodness, and of terror; and Shakespeare's fortitude of heart increased."

NOTE 3, p. 128.

"During all the modern period the Western mind in art must be regarded as having less and less religious guidance for its energies. It has had no faith. The old guidance was continually failing, while the new, though often admirably felt, was not yet visible. Having to find pleasant food for an unstable and increasingly revolutionary society, the artist, according to his genius, might amuse, delight, instruct, or even exalt, but the first characteristic of every work was that it was apart from religion—a special product. Art was thus degraded from its religious rank, and put among miscellaneous things. Hence it was often trivial in subject and hasty in execution, often addressed to a limited class, not seldom licentious—in a word, irreligious. Such spots may sometimes be seen in Shakespeare's sun; nor is it strange when we remember his occasional purpose and the base surroundings of his theatre. How wonderful rather that he should have been so good and pure! This was due to his great and affectionate character, but also to his neighbourhood to mediæval order. His intellectual apprehension of scepticism was extraordinary, and scepticism had not got possession of his heart" (Vernon Lushington, "New Calendar of Great Men," p. 428).

NOTE 4, p. 131.

"The first phase of the modern Revolution, transmitting the mediæval influence, produced an impulse which gave rise in the second phase to a truly admirable poetic movement, in which all the nations of the west took part. . . . The general poetic activity derived its source from the profound inspiration which had been imparted to all the West by the poem of Dante

and even by that of À Kempis, which, by their pictures of the Middle Age, co-operated, each in its own way, in inaugurating modern civilisation. . . . The general tendency of the West towards a rational and pacific mode of life had now become predominant enough to call forth an indirect and preparatory idealisation of it. The art thus evoked naturally found its chief subject in private life : but it succeeded in embracing public life also, by drawing its themes from the past, as the present was too unsettled for such a purpose. In both these fields of poetic activity Protestantism was an obstruction, disturbing the domestic relations, and inspiring dislike to the Middle Age, the memories of which were alone able to stir the popular heart. . . . The profoundly original genius of Shakespeare sought to represent the union of private and public life, assigning its due preponderance to the latter, and breaking free from the trammelling distinction between the epic and dramatic forms, a distinction which is more seeming than real, and will in the end be given up. The Protestantism, however, in the midst of which he lived, made him turn away from the Middle Age, and even hindered his attaining a due appreciation of Antiquity, so that this free thinker was obliged to devote his chief pieces to the illustration of periods that were too near his own time to admit of being satisfactorily handled" (Comte's "Positive Polity," vol. iii. pp. 485–86; *cf.* also vol. ii. ch. v.; and "Positive Philosophy," vol. ii. pp. 327–33).

Note 5, p. 133.

Cf. article by W. S. Lilly on "Shakespeare as a Roman Catholic," to which the best answer is this simple paragraph in Mr. Sidney Lee's very fresh and comprehensive "Life of William Shakespeare" :—

"The religious exordium (of Shakespeare's will) is in conventional phraseology, and gives no clue to Shakespeare's personal religious opinions. What those opinions were, we have neither the means nor the warrant for discussing. But while it is

possible to quote from the plays many contemptuous references to the Puritans and their doctrines, we may dismiss as idle gossip Davies's irresponsible report that he 'dyed a Papist'" (Lee's "Life," p. 273).

For myself that paragraph is sufficient. If more is asked by any reader, there is no need for me to attempt to expand feebly what I have already said in my lecture, and which, at any rate, is here said, as I think finally and conclusively, by Dr. Dowden.

"It has been asked whether Shakespeare was a Protestant or a Catholic, and he has been proved to belong to each communion to the satisfaction of contending theological zealots. Shakespeare's poetry, resting upon a purely human basis, is not a rendering into art of the dogmas of either Catholicism or Protestantism. Shakespeare himself, a great artistic nature, framed for manifold joy and pain, may, like other artists, have had no faculty for the attainment of certitude upon extra-mundane and superhuman matters; of concrete moral facts he had the clearest perception, but we do not find that he was interested, at least as an artist, in truths or alleged truths which transcend the limits of human experience. That the world suggests inquiries which cannot be answered, that mysteries confront and baffle us, that around our knowledge lies ignorance, around light darkness—this to Shakespeare seemed a fact containing within it a profound significance, which might almost be named religious. But, studiously as Shakespeare abstains from embodying theological dogma in his art, and tolerant as his spirit is, it is certain that the spirit of Protestantism—of Protestantism considered as part of a great movement of humanity—animates and breathes through his writings. Unless he had stood in antagonism to his time it could not be otherwise. Shakespeare's creed is not a series of abstract statements of truth, but a body of concrete impulses, tendencies, and habits. The spirit of his faith is not to be ascertained by bringing together little sentences from the utterances of this one of his *dramatis personæ* and of that. By such a method he might be proved an atheist. The faith by which Shakespeare

lived is rather to be discovered by noting the total issue and resultant of his art towards the fostering and maintenance of a certain type of human character. It may be asserted, without hesitation, that the Protestant type of character, and the Protestant polity in state and nation, is that which has received impulse and vigour from the mind of the greatest of English poets. Energy, devotion to the fact, self-government, tolerance, a disbelief in minute apparatus for the improvement of human character, an indifference to externals in comparison with that which is of the invisible life, and a resolution to judge all things from a purely human standpoint—these grow upon us as habits of thought and feeling as long as Shakespeare remains an influence with us in the building up of character. Such habits of thought and feeling are those which belong more especially to the Protestant ideal of manhood" ("Mind and Art of Shakespeare," p. 37).

"The same soil that produced Bacon and Hooker produced Shakespeare; the same environment fostered the growth of all three. Can we discover anything possessed in common by the scientific movement, the ecclesiastical movement, and the drama of the period? That which appears to be common to all is *a rich feeling for positive concrete fact*. The facts with which the drama concerns itself are those of human character in its living play. And assuredly, whatever be its imperfection, its crudeness, its extravagance, no other body of literature has amassed in equal fulness and equal variety a store of concrete facts concerning human character and human life; assuredly not the drama of Æschylus and Sophocles, not the drama of Calderon and Lope de Vega, not the drama of Corneille and Racine. These give us views of human life, and select portions of it for artistic handling. The Elizabethan drama gives us the stuff of life itself, the coarse with the fine, the mean with the heroic, the humorous and grotesque with the tragic and the terrible" (Dowden, "Mind and Art of Shakespeare," p. 23).

NOTE 6, p. 134.

"The *Ego* is in the dramas of Shakespeare in all the modifications, mysteries, and apparent irregularities of which conscience is susceptible. But it does not reign alone. In his plays, as in the Middle Ages, an unseen power governs the actions of the individual, follows ever on his track, and impels him along the paths himself has chosen to the catastrophe that choice determines. It is no universal law acting upon collective humanity; no social religious idea. Shakespeare shows neither the consciousness of a law nor of humanity; the future is mute in his dramas, and enthusiasm for great principles unknown. His genius comprehends and sums up the past and the present; it does not initiate the future. He interpreted an epoch; he announced none. Necessity, which was the soul of the period, stalks invisibly throughout his dramas, magically introduced—whether by art or instinct I know not;—I know that its reflex is seen alike on the brow of Othello and Macbeth; it colours the scepticism of Hamlet and the light irony of Mercutio; it surrounds with a halo of previsioned love the figures of his women, divine creatures, sacred to love, innocence, and resignation; and it inspires the generality of his personages with those reflections on the nullity of human things and the worthlessness of life which so constantly recur throughout his plays, and leave a bitter sense of delusion on the youthful soul that approaches the works of genius as a sanctuary wherein to seek inspiration and counsel for maturer years. . . . Shakespeare felt the void around the solitary soul; he felt the worthlessness of human life when not united with other lives by faith in a common progress; and he revealed it in many passages similar to that in which he bitterly says:—

> 'Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more; it is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing—'

But man was not sent here to enact the part of an idiot, burthensome to himself and useless to others; and if life be but a shadow, when sanctified by a sacrifice it is the shadow of God. . . . With Shakespeare the drama expires. I speak of the drama in its highest form, that organic drama which lays the foundations of an entire school, reflects the lineaments of a whole epoch, and displays upon the scene the ruling characteristics and generative element of a whole period of civilisation. Such a drama as this can only coexist with a religious idea, and after Shakespeare this religious idea continued to languish until it disappeared. The *Ego* rebelled against Necessity, as it had formerly rebelled against Fate, and recommenced with regard to moral Equality the work accomplished by Greek genius with regard to Liberty" (Mazzini, "Critical and Literary Studies," vol. ii. p. 138).

Note 7, p. 137.

"2 Henry VI.," Act iv. sc. 6, 7, and 8. Compare also "Troilus and Cressida," Act i. sc. 3. No more logical and decisive condemnation of revolutionary equality was probably ever uttered than in this speech of the wise Ulysses:—

> "The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre,
> Observe degree, priority and place,
> Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
> Office and custom, in all line of order;
> And therefore is the glorious planet, Sol,
> In noble eminence enthroned and spheral,
> Amidst the other; whose medicinable eye
> Corrects the ill aspects of planets evil,
> And posts, like the commandment of a king,
> Sans check, to good and bad: but when the planets,
> In evil mixture, to disorder wander,
> What plagues, and what portents, what mutiny,
> What raging of the sea, shaking of earth,
> Commotion in the winds, frights, changes, horrors,
> Divert and crack, rend and deracinate

The unity and married calm of states
Quite from their fixture! O! when degree is shak'd
Which is the ladder to all high designs,
The enterprise is sick. How could communities,
Degrees in schools, and brotherhoods in cities,
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,
The primogenitive and due of birth,
Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,
But by degree, stand in authentic place?
Take but degree away, untune that string,
And hark, what discord follows! each thing meets
In mere oppugnancy: the bounded waters
Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,
And make a sop of all this solid globe:
Strength should be lord of imbecility,
And the rude son should strike his father dead:
Force should be right; or rather, right and wrong
(Between whose endless jar justice resides)
Should lose their names, and so should justice too.
Then everything includes itself in power,
Power into will, will into appetite,
And appetite, an universal wolf,
So doubly seconded with will and power,
Must make perforce an universal prey,
And last eat up himself. Great Agamemnon,
This chaos, when degree is suffocate,
Follows the choking.
And this neglection of degree it is
That by a pace goes backward, with a purpose
It hath to climb. The general's disdained
By him one step below; he, by the next;
That next by him beneath; so every step,
Exampled by the first pace that is sick
Of his superior, grows to an envious fever
Of pale and bloodless emulation:
And 'tis this fever that keeps Troy on foot,
Not her own sinews. To end a tale of length,
Troy in our weakness stands, not in her strength."

NOTE 8, p. 139.

"Note broadly in the outset, Shakespeare has no heroes;—he has only heroines. There is not one entirely heroic figure in all his plays, except the slight sketch of Henry the Fifth, exaggerated for the purposes of the stage; and the still slighter Valentine in 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona.' In his laboured and perfect plays you have no hero. Othello would have been one, if his simplicity had not been so great as to leave him the prey of every base practice round him; but he is the only example even approximating to the heroic type. Coriolanus—Cæsar—Antony, stand in flawed strength, and fall by their vanities; Hamlet is indolent and drowsily speculative; Romeo, an impatient boy; the Merchant of Venice languidly submissive to adverse fortune; Kent, in 'King Lear,' is entirely noble at heart, but too rough and unpolished to be of true use at the critical time, and he sinks into the office of a servant only. Orlando, no less noble, is yet the despairing toy of chance, followed, comforted, saved, by Rosalind. Whereas there is hardly a play that has not a perfect woman in it, steadfast in grave hope and errorless purpose: Cordelia, Desdemona, Isabella, Hermione, Imogen, Queen Katherine, Perdita, Sylvia, Viola, Rosalind, Helena, and last and perhaps loveliest, Virgilia, are all faultless; conceived in the highest heroic type of humanity.

"Then observe, secondly, the catastrophe of every play is caused always by the fault or folly of a man; the redemption, if there be any, is by the wisdom and virtue of a woman, and failing that there is none. The catastrophe of King Lear is owing to his own want of judgment, his impatient vanity, his misunderstanding of his children; the virtue of his one true daughter would have saved him from all the injuries of the others unless he had cast her away from him; as it is, she all but saved him.

"Of Othello I need not trace the tale; nor the one weakness of his so mighty love; nor the inferiority of his perceptive intellect to that even of the second woman character in the play, the

Emilia who dies in wild testimony against his error :—'Oh murderous coxcomb! what should such a fool do with so good a wife?'

"In 'Romeo and Juliet,' the wise and entirely brave stratagem of the wife is brought to ruinous issue by the reckless impatience of her husband. In 'Winter's Tale' and in 'Cymbeline,' the happiness and existence of two princely households, lost through long years, and imperilled to the death by the folly and obstinacy of the husbands, are redeemed at last by the queenly patience and wisdom of the wives. In 'Measure for Measure' the injustice of the judges, and the corrupt cowardice of the brother, are opposed to the victorious truth and adamantine purity of a woman. In 'Coriolanus,' the mother's counsel, acted upon in time, would have saved her son from all evil; his momentary forgetfulness of it is his ruin; her prayer, at last granted, saves him—not indeed from death, but from the curse of living as the destroyer of his country.

"And what shall I say of Julia, constant against the fickleness of a lover who is a mere wicked child?—of Helena, against the petulance and insult of a careless youth?—of the patience of Hero, the passion of Beatrice, and the calmly devoted wisdom of the 'unlessoned girl' who appears among the helplessness, the blindness, and the vindictive passions of men, as a gentle angel to save merely by her presence, and defeat the worst intensities of crime by her smile?

"Observe, further, among all the principal figures in Shakespeare's plays there is only one weak woman—Ophelia; and it is because she fails Hamlet at the critical moment, and is not, and cannot in her nature be, a guide to him when he needs her most, that all the bitter catastrophe follows. Finally, though there are three wicked women among the principal figures, Lady Macbeth, Regan, and Goneril, they are felt at once to be frightful exceptions to the ordinary rules of life; fatal in their influence also in proportion to the power for good which they have abandoned.

"Such in broad light is Shakespeare's testimony to the

position and character of women in human life. He represents them as infallibly faithful and wise counsellors—incorruptibly just and pure examples—strong always to sanctify, even when they cannot save" (Ruskin, "Sesame and Lilies," pp. 126–131 ; *cf.* also Mrs. Jamieson's "Characteristics of Women," introduction, and p. 214 ; and Dowden's "Mind and Art," pp. 110–13). Dowden quotes from Rümelin, "Shakespeare Studien," pp. 288–92, a statement "that in consequence of his position as player, Shakespeare was excluded from the acquaintance of women of fine culture and character, and therefore drew upon his fancy for his female portraits. At the same time Shakespeare shared with Goethe, Petrarch, Raphael, Dante, Rousseau, Jean Paul (a strange assemblage !) a mystical veneration for the feminine element of humanity as the higher and more divine."

NOTE 9, p. 141.

In regard to this point, the following criticism from the *Spectator* of July 29, 1905, is pertinent. It occurs in a review of a book by Mr. J. W. Gray, entitled "Shakespeare's Marriage." The reviewer writes :—

"After stating that Shakespeare 'subordinated his genius to the attainment of objects among which the making of a great name in literature formed an insignificant part,' Mr. Gray goes on to say that 'he shared with Richard Burbage and Edward Alleyn the business ability that enabled them to amass wealth by catering for the amusement of the public,' and adds : 'Lyric and Epic poetry were probably neglected for this more profitable occupation, and indulged in merely as a pastime or out of deference to the prevailing fashion of writing sonnets.' Imputations of this sort have been common enough since the days of Pope's famous couplet. Shakespeare, 'for gold, not glory, winged his roving flight' ; his motives were mercenary ; he took up writing as his profession ; and, as he was a good man of business, he made it pay. From the nature of the case, it is extremely difficult to rebut such charges ; but there is at least one con-

sideration which seems to point to a very different conclusion. Every one knows that the dramatic work of the great majority of Shakespeare's contemporaries was habitually marred by grossnesses which appealed directly and strongly to the bad taste of Elizabethan audiences. On Mr. Gray's theory, we surely ought to find these blemishes scattered as profusely in the plays of Shakespeare as in those of Fletcher or Middleton. But this is precisely what we do not find. Errors of taste there may be, but there is not a trace of that systematic vulgarisation of thought and word which we know was the surest road in those days to popular success. It is difficult to resist the inference that Shakespeare deliberately avoided that sort of applause and that sort of profit which was incompatible with the nobler interests of art."

NOTE 10, p. 143.

Especially would I commend Professor Bradley's first lecture on the substance of Tragedy, in which he discusses with fine balance of judgment and keen analytic insight the problem of Shakespeare's ethical attitude towards his "tragic heroes," as to whether the ultimate power in his tragic world was regarded by him as fatalistic or providential, as a fate blind and indifferent to human happiness and goodness, or as a law which can be said to be just or benevolent, as to whether his view of the tragic fact can be thought of as Christian or simply agnostic. Professor Bradley holds the balance very evenly. His final summary of argument is this :—

"Thus we are left at last with an idea showing two sides or aspects which we can neither separate nor reconcile. The whole an order against which the individual part shows itself powerless seems to be animated by a passion for perfection ; we cannot otherwise explain its behaviour towards evil. Yet it appears to engender this evil within itself, and in its effort to overcome and expel it, it is agonised with pain, and driven to mutilate its own substance, and to love not only evil but priceless

good. That this idea, though very different from the idea of a blank fate, is no solution to the riddle of life is obvious ; but why should we expect it to be such a solution ? Shakespeare was not attempting to justify the ways of God to men, or to show the universe as a Divine Comedy. He was writing tragedy, and tragedy would not be tragedy if it were not a painful mystery Nor can he be said to point distinctly, like some writers of tragedy, in any direction where a solution might lie. We find a few references to gods or God, to the influence of the stars, to another life ; some of them certainly, all of them perhaps, merely dramatic—appropriate to the person from whose lips they fall. A ghost comes from Purgatory to impart a secret out of the reach of its hearer—who presently meditates on the question whether the sleep of death is dreamless. Accidents once or twice remind us strangely of the words 'There's a divinity doth shape our ends.' More important are other impressions. Sometimes from the very furnace of affliction a conviction seems borne to us that somehow, if we could see it, this agony counts as nothing against the heroism and love which appear in it and thrill our hearts. Sometimes we are driven to cry out that these mighty or heavenly spirits who perish are too great for the little space in which they move, and that they vanish, not into nothingness, but into freedom. Sometimes from these sources, and from others, comes a presentiment, formless but haunting, and even profound, that all the fury of conflict, with its waste and woe, is less than half the truth, even an illusion, 'such stuff as dreams are made of.' But these faint and scattered intimations that the tragic world, being but a fragment of a whole beyond our vision, must needs be a contradiction, and no ultimate truth, avail nothing to interpret the mystery. We remain confronted with the inexplicable fact, or the no less inexplicable appearance, of a world travailing for perfection, but bringing to birth, together with glorious good, an evil which it is able to overcome only by self-torture and self-waste, and this fact or appearance is tragedy " (pp. 37–39).

For Professor Bradley's words "self-torture" and "self-waste" read "self-discipline" and "self-sacrifice," and we have here almost the solution of the Christian apostle as to the burden of the universe — "The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Romans viii. 19–22). And certainly, however much the attitude of Shakespeare towards the tragic world, and the free temper of his work generally, may be that of reverent scepticism, it is never that of the cynic. And in estimating the "ethos" of character, that surely means very much. There may be justly a Christian scepticism, but there never can be a Christian cynicism. And the tragic heroes of Shakespeare, though they may often be wretched and awful, are never small, are never contemptible. Professor Bradley, indeed, is right when elsewhere he says: "Shakespearean tragedy is never, like some miscalled tragedies, depressing. No one ever closes the book with the feeling that man is a poor creature." No; for whatever else may be true of the ethical ideas of Shakespeare, certainly he had, consciously or unconsciously, the Christian idea of the potential greatness of man, of the inherent dignity of human nature. That is plain all through his tragedies. His heroes may fail horribly, may even fall into detestable crime, but they have all a touch of greatness about them. In the worst of them we feel always the potentiality of the good behind the evil; in the best of them we realise the full power and reach of the human soul; and in each case because of the potentiality we are stirred not only to admiration and terror and awe, but also to sympathy and pity.

Consider for a moment, in this connection, such a character as that of Brutus in the play of "Julius Cæsar." Could such

a character conceivably have been painted by a cynic? Indeed, in "that noblest Roman of them all" is there not also an element of character which is essentially Christian?

How else shall we explain those striking lines which Shakespeare places in his hero's mouth just before his death?—

> "Countrymen,
> My heart doth joy that yet, in all my life
> I found no man but he was true to me!"

Why was it, we ask, that Brutus in all his life had never found a man untrue to him? Was it that his experience of human life was exceptional; that circumstances had thrown him only among men of warm generosity and transparent truthfulness? or was the secret to be found in his own character? Was it that before the child-like trustfulness and simplicity of heart of Brutus even otherwise faithless men were shamed into fidelity? Was it that before his grand innocence and simpleness of soul even meditated treachery was disarmed? Did the very frankness of Brutus' trust, the very force of his expectation of "good faith" in others, tend to create that virtue where it did not already exist?

I like to think so. And I also like to think that Shakespeare, in emphasising that quality in the character of his noblest hero, was not unconscious that the contagious power of trust, the spirit of charity believing all things, of Love trusting all, of Hope confiding in the best side of every man, believing that every man has a good side, was an essential element in the noblest Christian character, as it was the most potent agency of appeal to a sinner's heart in the redemptive method of Jesus Christ. In a materialistic world Brutus the idealist was foredoomed to fail. But to have kept true to himself and his ideal was also to have won victory through his failure. And victory through failure is one of the noblest lessons of the cross of Jesus Christ.

LECTURE IV

ROBERT BROWNING

ROBERT BROWNING

(BURIED WESTMINSTER ABBEY, DEC. 31, 1889)

High noon: yet shrouded as with funeral pall
The city streets. The Abbey bell tolls slow:
The organ sounds, and solemn voices low
Chant requiem for the dying year, and all
His greatness buried with the year: one call
For both, the human record ending so;
And dust to kindred dust is laid. And lo!
Once more on good and evil, great and small,
Sun shines: old earth swings round and glad New Year
Dawns on a larger Day: larger for him
Who, when the light of earth was waxing dim,
Still cried, "Fight on, fare ever, there as here!
Man's creeds may pass, yet long as days endure
Earth changes, but the soul and God stand sure."

LECTURE IV

ROBERT BROWNING

"Giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the son of his love; in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins: who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things have been created through him and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist; and he is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence."

—Colossians i. 12–18.

In this majestic and wide-embracing sentence we have not only one of the earliest records of the apostolic teaching in regard to the personality of Christ, but also the one authoritative credential for an optimistic faith in regard to Christ's creative and administrative work in the world.

Thirty years ago, when Dr. Lightfoot was writing here in Cambridge his commentary on this epistle, he lamented that the Church of England had allowed this doctrine of the Incarnation, this idea of Christ as the supreme person in all history—the image of the invisible God, the perfect manifestation in human form of the

eternal reason, the logos of Greek thought, "by whose agency the world of matter was created and is sustained, who is at once the beginning and the end of material things," the Head also of His Church, that great spiritual society which was to extend through all Christian ages as the ideal storehouse of redemption for ever, the permanent home where all human relations were to find their consecration and ennoblement—to fall into the background of modern theological thought.

"The loss," he said, "is most serious. How much our theological conceptions suffer in breadth and fulness by the neglect a moment's reflection will show. How much more hearty would be the sympathy of theologians with the revelations of science, and the developments of history, if they habitually connected them with the operation of the same Divine Word who is the centre of all their religious aspirations, it is needless to say. Through the recognition of this idea with all the consequences which flow from it, as a living influence, more than in any other way, may we hope to strike the chords of that 'vaster music' which results only from the harmony of knowledge and of faith, of reverence and research."[1]

During the last two decades of the last century we have seen this hope of our great Bishop largely fulfilled. Not only in the theological writings of the two other members of that wonderful Cambridge triumvirate, in such brilliant essays as those of Aubrey Moore[2] and Dr. Illingworth[3] in *Lux Mundi*, and in the latter writer's book on the "Divine Immanence," in Dr. Gore's

"Bampton Lectures," and in his "Dissertations on Subjects connected with the Incarnation," in the many learned and philosophical articles on the development of Christian doctrine in Hastings' "Dictionary of the Bible," and in the "Encyclopædia Biblica," but also in the more popular pulpit teaching of all thoughtful preachers of our day, do we find the doctrine of the Incarnation, in the larger sense indicated by Dr. Lightfoot, given a place and prominence which was certainly quite unusual thirty, or even twenty, years ago.

Anglican theology in fact seems to be gradually passing behind the somewhat pinched and narrow faith of the Latin theologians to the richer, more large-hearted, more inspiring doctrine of the Incarnation, which is characteristic of the great Greek Christian fathers of the early Church. Our modes of thought, in fact—to quote a saying of Aubrey Moore—are becoming every day increasingly Greek. Slowly, and under the shock of controversy, we seem to be recovering the buried truths of Christianity, and to be realising the greatness of our heritage. The almost forgotten doctrine of the Divine Immanence, the belief in Christ, the incarnate Word, as "creation's secret force," comes to us with all the power of a new discovery.

I have observed that of late years it has become rather the fashion to speak of this change of attitude in Anglican theologians as mainly due to the publication of *Lux Mundi* in the year 1889. Now, I have no wish, of course, to deny that to the publication of that book, and still more perhaps to the subsequent work of its editor

and of his group of brilliant Oxford friends, much of the revival of interest in the theological doctrines of Christianity, and especially in their application to the great social problems of modern life, is very largely due. But we at least in Cambridge ought not, I think, to forget that this re-statement or readjustment of Christian doctrine, which has so intimately affected the later character of the Anglican revival, had taken place completely in the teaching of one great Christian Doctor of the nineteenth century, perhaps its greatest, more than sixty years ago — I mean in the writings of Frederick Denison Maurice.

I trust I am not exhibiting the spirit of a false University patriotism when I express the opinion that the "Oxford Movement" in the English Church is hardly the full equivalent of the "Anglican Revival" in the nineteenth century, or of the mere partiality of an old pupil in this place of Frederick Maurice, when I say that it sometimes seems to me that the younger generation of Oxford theologians, who "regard themselves as adjusting the High Church theology of Dr. Pusey and his generation to the newer knowledge of our day," do not, at least publicly, sufficiently recognise the debt which they owe to Maurice for the lead which he gave more than sixty years ago.

I do not mean, of course, to assert that the doctrine of the Incarnation in its modern re-statement originated solely with Maurice. But he was the theologian who first in our time set it forth in the new form which the new age needed.[4]

Maurice himself confessed his obligation especially

to Coleridge, and there can be no doubt that that transcendental thinker did give a very strong direction to Maurice's thought, as indeed, in conjunction with Wordsworth, he did to most of the early leaders of the Liberal Movement in Theology in the last century. Indeed, I think it is both interesting and curious to observe that the teaching of Coleridge has been claimed by both the Liberal and the Catholic school in the Church of England as a chief source of inspiration. You will all remember, for example, the passage in Newman's "Apologia" in which that great leader claims Coleridge as a philosophical initiator of the High Church school, "laying a basis for Church feelings and opinions, installing a higher philosophy into inquiring minds," and thus "making trial of his age and succeeding in interesting its genius in the cause of Catholic truth."[5]

And it is true, no doubt, that, just as the literary influence of Sir Walter Scott succeeded in turning back the thoughts of Englishmen from eighteenth-century prose to the glamour and poetry of the Middle Ages, awakened them to the noble traditions of mediæval chivalry and romance, and thus prepared the way for the Catholic revival in the Church of England, so also did Coleridge help in his transcendental way to summon to life from the Catholic past things which had been dead or sleeping, which have in their turn contributed to the enrichment and the impassionment of the religious imagination of the Anglo-Catholic school.

Yet it is nevertheless certain that the deeper life of Coleridge's thought—the spirit at least of such books as his "Aids to Reflection," with its re-reading and renova-

tion of the evangelical doctrines of Sin and Redemption; his "Confessions of an Enquiring Spirit," with its championship of a broad and yet a devout Biblical criticism; his essay on the "Constitution of Church and State," with its revival of the historic idea of the Church as an intellectual as well as a spiritual commonwealth—belongs rather by strict legitimate descent to that school of theology whose heredity, so to say, is plainly traceable backwards through Maurice and Coleridge to the Cambridge Platonists of the seventeenth century—Cudworth, Smith, Henry More, Whichcote; to the Oxford reformers of the fifteenth century—Colet, Erasmus, and More: finally, behind the Latin set-back of a thousand years, to the great Greek Christian fathers of the Catechetical School of Alexandria at the close of the second century.[6]

And the Future—can we indeed doubt it?—is with this older Church, which is also the newer. For the same God who has brought us back in our day to the old problems of Christ's Personality, to the old problems as it would almost seem of Athanasius and Irenæus and Origen, also sets to us to-day the task of solving them. But we must not—we cannot—try to solve them quite on the old lines. "Since the Fathers fell asleep" all things have not quite remained as they were from the beginning. Latin theology, western orthodoxy, have, I suppose, taught the world their lesson. It is the Church's fault, at least, if it has not learnt the meaning of order and law, of discipline and dogma. But for us to-day, for most of us to-day, the Latin Church is dead,

and, unless Christ Himself raise it from the dead, the Future must look elsewhere for its guide. We cannot forget St. Paul's maxim: "When old things are passed away, behold they are become new . . . in Christ there is a new creation." It is always so. The old problems are becoming new again to-day in the fuller light of modern knowledge, the fuller light of Scripture and History and Science.

And that we may assure ourselves that the witness of these things is a witness of Hope, I am proposing to make my appeal to-day not to the students of either Scripture, or of History, or of Science, but to that poet of the last century who was a true child of the new age in Christian theology, and who saw far more clearly than many theologians that these three—Scripture, History, Science—must agree in one if they were to be a true witness to that Incarnate Lord of all, who is the final truth of this world and of all worlds to come. For the new outlook in theology—the Neo-Greek outlook, if I may so call it—is at the very heart of Browning's poetry. The central doctrine of it, indeed, *the Immanence of the Divine in Man*, which is the essential truth of the doctrine of the Incarnation, involving, as it does, the reconsecration through Christ of all human life and thought, and with it the constant appeal to the eternal and spiritual issues of human action, was perhaps for the first time with success in English verse used essentially and avowedly as a motive in Browning's poetry. This it is which makes him, and will more and more, if I mistake not, as the days go on, make him, the poetic exponent of the faiths, hopes, and aspirations of our modern time.

It finds, perhaps, its first and fullest expression in his "Paracelsus," but it underlies all his subsequent poetry. Paracelsus, the Renaissance scholar, half-genius, half-charlatan, lies dying in the dim and narrow cell of the hospital at Salzburg. All night his faithful friend has watched beside his bed. The mind of the dying man is working as the sea works after a tempest, and strange wrecks of memory float past him in troubled visions. At last calm comes with the dawn, and he knows his friend, and it is laid upon him before he dies to tell the secret of life. His past lies before him—its wisdom and sophistry, its success and failure, its great achievement, its sorry farce—and he sees at last the errors of his way. "He had been dazzled by knowledge, and the power conferred by knowledge: he had not understood God's plan of gradual evolution through the ages: he had laboured for his race in pride rather than in love: he had been maddened by the intellectual infirmities, the moral imperfections of men, whereas he ought to have recognised even in these the capacities of a creature in progress to a higher development. Now, at length, he can follow in thought the great circle of God's creative energy ever welling forth from Him in vast undulations, ever tending to return to Him again, which return Godwards is already foretold in the nature of man by august anticipations, by strange gleams of splendour, by cares and fears not bounded by this our earth."

> "I knew, I felt, . . . what God is, what we are,
> What life is,—how God tastes an infinite joy
> In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss,
> From whom all being emanates, all power

Proceeds; in whom is life for evermore,
Yet whom existence in its lowest form
Includes; where dwells enjoyment there is He:
With still a flying point of bliss remote,
A happiness in store afar, a sphere
Of distant glory in full view . . .
. . . God renews
His ancient rapture. Thus He dwells in all
From life's minute beginnings, up at last
To man—the consummation of this scheme
Of being . . .
In my own heart love had not been made wise
To trace love's beginnings in mankind,
To know even hate is but a mask of love's;
To see a good in evil, and a hope
In ill-success; to sympathise, be proud
Of man's half reasons, faint aspirings, dim
Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,
Their prejudice and fears and cares and doubts:
All with a touch of nobleness, despite
Their error, upward tending all, though weak,
Like plants in mines which never saw the sun,
But dream of him and guess where he may be,
And do their best to climb and get to him.
. . . If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time: I press God's lamp
Close to my breast: its splendour soon or late
Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge one day."[7]

Here in Browning's poetry are all the great affirmations of Christianity which we find in that great christological sentence from the Epistle to the Colossians, which I read as my text, and which in modern terms may be expressed thus:—God, whose Christian name is Love, self-conscious Love, at the heart of all being, the Creator,

the Father, the Educator of Humanity—Evolution, God's way of making things come to pass, God's way of Order and Progress—God and man, brought into a relationship with one another, immediate and direct, by the realisation of the true order of the world, as the kingdom of the Son of His love, a kingdom invisible, spiritual, universal—Love, the energy of all life—Life, true life meaning Mission, meaning Discipline, meaning Service—never one lost good—noble failure the way to ultimate success—Imperfection, only perfection hid, a soul of goodness in things evil—Death only the entrance to fuller life and clearer vision, because Christ "is the first-born from the dead," that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.

It might seem perhaps most reverent to let the poet speak for himself, and make his own words illustrate these great affirmations. But that is, of course, impossible. Browning's work is the largest body of poetry produced by any one poet in the whole range of English literature. It would be futile therefore to attempt to cover the whole field suggested by these affirmations, even if I could command the rapidity of him who "brought the good news from Ghent."

Let me take two points only for representative illustration.

I. Take first the Christian Faith in a good God, as it is affected by that *partus temporis*, that category of our age, the scientific hypothesis of Evolution.

"It is hard to believe in God," said Lord Tennyson once, "but it is harder not to believe. I believe in God not from what I see in nature, but from what I find in man.

. . . God is Love, transcendent, all-pervading. But we do not get this faith from nature or the world. If we look at nature alone, full of perfection and imperfection, she tells us that God is disease, murder and rapine. We get this faith from ourselves, from what is highest within us, which recognises that there is not one fruitless pang, just as there is not, as Browning says, 'one lost good.'"

The comparison which this last allusion of Lord Tennyson suggests between his own "In Memoriam," where in Cantos lv.–lvi. he has written out large in verse this prose expression of his faith, and Browning's splendid lyric, "Abt Vogler," in which he expresses that hunger for eternity and perfection which is at once the sign of his romantic temper and the Christian basis of his ethical theory of life, serves, I think, to remind us that both Tennyson and Browning are children of our modern age of new Science and new Theology. Both poets write with the fullest knowledge of the discoveries of modern science, and of the great problems that occupied the minds of the deepest thinkers of their day. As we read the cantos of "In Memoriam," we cannot help feeling that Tennyson has read his Darwin, and understands the facts of Evolution and of the struggle for existence; and yet—

> "He trusted God was love indeed,
> And Love creation's final law,
> Though Nature, red in tooth and claw
> With ravine, shrieked against his creed."

We feel that Tennyson has read his Lyell, and knows how the facts of geology show that what is true of

individuals is true of types, and that all creation lives and dies, comes into existence and is transformed by immutable laws—

"So careful of the type? But No!
From scarpèd cliff and quarried stone
She cries, A thousand types are gone,
I care for nothing, all shall go.

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger Hope."

We feel also that Tennyson has read his Herbert Spencer, and that at least, like Spencer, he sees that this world is not all, that underlying the known and knowable facts of consciousness there is a great unknown, in presence of which we can only veil our faces and bow in reverent humility, and cry—

"O yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt and taints of blood.

That nothing walks with aimless feet,
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void
When God has made the pile complete."

And Browning knows all this, and feels this too —knows it perhaps with a more intimate knowledge than Tennyson; feels it assuredly with a deeper, more passionate certainty of faith. You have only to read, for example, the context of that passage which I quoted

from "Paracelsus," to realise how complete is Browning's grasp of the great scientific hypothesis of Evolution; and this is the more remarkable when we remember that his "Paracelsus" was published in 1835, and Darwin's "Origin of Species" not until twenty years after, in 1859. "All that seems proved in Darwin's scheme," he wrote to Dr. Furnival in 1881, "was a conception familiar to me from the beginning." And you certainly will not read "Abt Vogler" without feeling how passionate is the certainty of Browning's faith.

"Abt Vogler" is only one of several poems dedicated by Browning to Music. And there is, I think, deep significance in this for the Christian apologist. I have read somewhere that a poor cripple, shipwrecked in all else save the noble intelligence, hobbled pitiably away from the hearing of a Beethoven symphony in St. James's Hall, exclaiming, "I have heard that music for the fiftieth time. You see what I am. Yet, with this in my soul I go down Regent Street a God!" Is it wonderful, then, do you think, that Robert Browning—conscious of the arid prospect for humanity in a merely materialistic explanation of God's universe, in a theory which possesses the power to see the material in all things spiritual and mental, but fails to see the spiritual and the mental in all things material—should take Music as the very mirror of the central universal laws, as "the shadowed lesson of the world" (to use Sir Thomas Browne's fine phrase), and gain from this universal language, from its swift certitudes of intuition, from its quick mysterious action upon the very pulses of the soul of man, a new assurance for the certainty of the

Christian truth that "in our Father's house there are many mansions . . . not made with hands . . . for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal"?

In the poem of "Abt Vogler" Browning has represented the extemporising of the musician as filling the void which he has himself created with the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. The ghostly troop of sounds which the composer had summoned to life crowd about him, climb and mount and march upwards. As Solomon of old—so runs the legend of the Koran—when he built a palace for the princess whom he loved, summoned to his aid all armies of angels and demons by the ineffable Name on his magic ring, so now all the keys and stops, submitting to the magic power of the master-hand of the musician, combine to aid him—the low notes rushing in like demons to give him the bass on which to build his mighty temple of sound, the high notes like angels crowding to their many ministries of art and form and order and proportion; and, as the mystic building rises, the musician's soul seems to be upborne on the wings of his own mood into a realm where the limits of time and space had gone—"there was no more near nor far"—and, in that strange fusion of heaven and earth, the spirits of the noble Dead—"the wonderful Dead who have passed through the body and gone"—gather about him and whisper to him; and out of the music seems to come a mystic message, a something which is far apart from and above the sound—not indeed a sound—but a star, "a star of the eternal sky," a flash of God's will,

which in that moment of vision opens the eternal world to his very soul. He has slipped with sudden surprise into a strain which is less his than God's. For a moment he lives with it, passes to heaven with it, and then loses it, and yet not altogether. Can any good be so transitory as this music seems to have been? It cannot be. The great palace of Music, the magic temple, the phantom worshippers, vanish away, it is true. The vision passes; but the sense of a mystery of Divine suggestion abides in the heart; "the partial beauty" which is left remains "a pledge of beauty in its plenitude." The memory of the vision, even when he returns once more to the sober uninteresting key of C major, to common everyday life, the humdrum routine of hard duty and dull drudgery, will never cease to be a ground of aspiration, a motive for a faith wide as human life, deep as human need, reaching on to heaven and eternity.

"Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable Name?
Builder and Maker Thou of houses not made with hands!
What! have fear of change from Thee who art ever the same?
Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands?
There shall never be one lost good! what was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
What was good, shall *be* good, with, for evil, so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven a perfect round.
All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good, shall exist:
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power,
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that he heard it once: we shall hear it by and by.
. . . . . .

> Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear.
> Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe:
> But God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear.
> The rest may reason and welcome: 'tis we musicians know."

And perhaps the musicians are right. At any rate Browning in this poem, and in many another with the same matter of thought—"The Grammarian's Funeral," "Rabbi ben Ezra," "Andrea del Sarto," "Prospice"—has his lesson for the Christian apologist—ay, for the Christian believer—that without sin and evil and failure in the world, that without the Fall in the Garden of Eden, men might have been angels, but they never could have been men; that without defect of Nature, without Imperfection, God's kindest gift, they could never have had God's noblest gift, the desire for Perfection; they never could have had the charm of discovery, of pursuit, of conquest, the slow upbuilding of moral character; they never could have had the great and loving lives which throughout the history of Christendom have suffered and sacrificed and saved, from Christ Himself to the humblest of His martyrs starving for their children's sake in a London slum. True, with Browning as a teacher, the apologist and the theologian may have to welcome with admiration and thankfulness all the verified conclusions of evolutionary science, as so many revelations of the creative methods of the Divine Father of Humanity, may find it even necessary, in deference to the just claims of science and of history, and to the new terms of modern thought, to restate for the present age the dogmas of his faith, to readjust its doctrines, to refocus its truth. But one thing the Christian apologist, if he is a true follower

of Browning, will not do. He will not give up his faith in the Divine Fatherhood of God, and the filial relationship of man to God as the true basis of social order, or his optimistic faith in a good God controlling all the forces of evolution as the true source of social and moral progress.

Whatever Nature, therefore, may appear to be to the scientific evolutionist, to the Christian evolutionist it must ever remain precious as the sphere in which a Divine Life is manifested, as the object on which a Divine Love is lavished. If Huxley was right when he taught us that "cosmic force has no sort of relation to moral ends," then we must remember that Browning has taught us to call in ethical force to redress the balance, and to say that that theory of evolution is incomplete which claims to estimate the influence of the cosmic process on men in society, and fails to give its due weight to the ethical. As Christians, indeed, we shall demand a wider and a nobler conception of evolution as the way in which God makes things come to pass, as, in fact, to use a phrase of Herbert Spencer, "a transfigured realism," a conception in which, though the prehistoric triumph of cosmic nature, the fierce struggle for existence—"Nature red in tooth and claw with ravine"—cannot be forgotten (shall we ever forget the mystery of Pain until perhaps "behind the veil" we learn its secret?), yet also a conception in which what we shall most care to remember will be the greater and still more marvellous triumphs of the ethical process of evolution, not the miracles by which out of fierce despotism has come forth liberty; out of slavery, freedom; out of selfishness, self-sacrifice; out of might

right; out of fear, reverence; out of lust, love; out of the conflicts of self-interest, morality and virtue; ah, no! but rather the marvellous triumphs of the grace of God in the human heart, by which out of suffering has come moral strength and nobility of character; out of the mystery of pain have grown the marvels of spiritual victory; out of the fires of trial have been won the purity of the soul; out of failure borne nobly in the present has been gained for us hereafter a far more exceeding weight of glory; out of martyrdom has grown moral supremacy.

> "Then welcome each rebuff
> That turns earth's smoothness rough,
> Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
> Be our joys three parts pain!
> Strive to hold cheap the strain;
> Learn, nor account the pang: dare, never grudge the throe.
> For thence a paradox
> Which comforts while it mocks—
> Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
> What I aspired to be,
> And was not, comforts me;
> A brute I might have been, but would not sink in the scale."

Such a faith as this of Browning, believe me, is, as Mr. Balfour once said, "no ray of metaphysics floating in the sunshine of sentimentalism," for it rests on a positive basis, which only becomes broader and firmer with the widening of human experience.

II. I have only time left for one other consideration. "How," it may be asked, "does this poet of our

modern time, who undeniably exhibits such keen spiritual insight, interpret for us the personality of the Christ Himself in its influence on the spiritual nature of man?" To answer that question, we turn in the first instance naturally, I think, to the two related poems of "Christmas Eve" and "Easter Day."[8] The former has for its subject the spiritual life corporate, the latter the spiritual life individual. The former is a noble commentary on the text, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," there am I present in infinite compassion and love; not only with the refined, or the cultivated, or the æsthetic, or the orthodox disciples, but with the vulgar, and the ugly, and the ignorant, and the narrow. The latter is an equally fine commentary on the text, "Apart from Me ye can do nothing," forcing each of us to face our complacent religious selves, and to know whether we really feel what we profess to feel, the utter desolation of a character in which the root of love is cut off from all that can feed its true life.

The poem of "Christmas Eve" is written on the motive which is central to so much of Browning's poetry, that love is the supreme transfiguring power of life, and that therefore love is the one thing needful to true worship, the "good part" which, for those who choose it, Christ will not suffer any diversity of creed or development of doctrine ever to take from any one of us.

The poet tells how one Christmas Eve he was driven by stress of weather to take refuge in a little chapel—a poor place, standing disconsolate, with a few

houses near it, on the edge of a desolate common. The unsavoury atmosphere, "the hot smell and the human noises," the unattractive—in some cases repulsive—worshippers; above all,

> "The preaching man's immense stupidity
> As he poured his doctrine forth full measure
> To meet his audience's avidity:

as in fine irreverence he pulled the Book of books to pieces, and proved to demonstration how the Egyptian

> "Baker's dream of baskets three
> Proved doctrine of the Trinity,"

all these are too much for the fine sensibilities of the poet, and he "flings out of the little chapel" into the wind and rain, in utter disgust at the paltry and narrow faith of these professed worshippers of Christ. He will worship God in the fresh, free air. The open heaven shall be his temple:—

> "When lo! what think you? suddenly
> The rain and the wind ceased, and the sky
> Received at once the full fruition
> Of the moon's consummate apparition.
> The black cloud-barricade was riven,
> Ruined beneath her feet, and driven
> Deep in the west; while bare and breathless
> North and south and east lay ready
> For a glorious thing, that dauntless, deathless
> Sprang across them and stood steady.
> 'Twas a moon rainbow, vast and perfect,
> From heaven to heaven extending, perfect
> As the mother-moon's self, full in face,

It rose distinctly at the base,
With its seven proper colours chorded,
Which still in the rising were compressed,
Until at last they coalesced,
And supreme the spectral creature lorded
In a triumph of whitest white—
Above which intervened the night.
But above night too like only the next,
The second of a wondrous sequence,
Reaching in rare and rarer frequence
Till the heaven of heavens was circumflext,
Another rainbow rose, a mightier,
Fainter, flushier, and flightier—
Rapture dying along its verge!
Oh, whose foot shall I see emerge,
WHOSE, from the straining topmost dark
On to the keystone of that arc?"

Then follows the vision of the Christ, at once more supernatural and more unquestionably real, as it would seem, because of the sublimity of the scene, springing out of the grotesquerie—"He, Himself with His human air," who had been in the chapel too, and had left it apparently with the poet. The disciple tries to justify himself in some sort for despising Christ's friends.

"I thought it best that Thou, the Spirit
Be worshipped in spirit and in truth,
And in beauty as even we require it—
Not in the forms burlesque, uncouth,
I left but now, as scarcely fitted
For Thee . . . Then
The whole Face turned upon me full
And I spread myself beneath it,
As when the bleacher spreads, to seethe it,

In the cleansing sun, his wool—
Steeps in the flood of noontide whiteness
Some defiled, discoloured web—
So lay I saturate with brightness."

And the Master accepts the love, mistaken and imperfect though it is. He gathers the suppliant, as it were, in the folds of His long sweeping garment, carries him across the world, and in vision "whether in the body or out of the body he cannot tell," shows him other sights of other worshippers—at the high Festival on Christmas Eve in S. Peter's at Rome, in the Lecture Room of the sceptical Professor at Göttingen—sheep of the good Shepherd who are not of this fold—and teaches him all the lesson of His Love, until at last the disciple, at the bidding of Love—

"From the gift looking to the Giver,
And from the cistern to the River,
And from the finite to infinity,
And from man's dust to God's divinity,"

learns that although there needs must be one best way of worship, if indeed it is God's design to bring all wanderers to the true fold at last, yet for each disciple the best way of worship is that which is required by his own highest thought, his own purest passion, because Love, and no other word, is written on the forehead of all true worshippers of the Incarnate Christ in whose eyes love with defective knowledge is of infinitely more spiritual worth than knowledge with defective love—

"For the loving worm within its clod
Were diviner than a loveless God
Amid his worlds, I will dare to say."

In the companion poem of "Easter Day" it is still this thought of the supremacy of Love which is at the heart of the poem. The poet pictures himself once again by night on the desolate common, musing upon the secret of life and wondering how it would be with him if he were to die and find himself in a moment in the presence of his Divine Judge. Suddenly the doom is upon him. A fierce and vindictive scribble of red quick flame runs across the blackness of night: and a Voice beside him proclaims that—

> "Life is done,
> Time ends, eternity's begun."

And in the probation of life he knows that his choice has been not for heaven, but for earth, for the world of sense, with all its joy, its beauty, its art, its success, its knowledge. And again the Voice proclaims, "Eternity is here and thou art judged; thou hast chosen, the joys of earth be thine." But again all looks as it did before. He could not make it out. The world gone, yet here. Judgment past and eternity begun, and yet all things as in other days. It must be a horrid dream. He tries to shake it off. But in vain. Gradually, to his despair, he finds that what he had chosen brings him no happiness, no content. The plenitude of beauty, the glory of art, the joy of knowledge, all these fail him. Earth is no longer earth to the doomed man. In the horror of its blank and passionless uniformity, he cowers at the Judge's feet, and knows at last that Love is the essence and the worth of all things, and he cries for that, for Love only—

"Is this thy final choice?
Love is the best? 'Tis somewhat late!
And all thou dost enumerate
Of power and beauty in the world,
The righteousness of love was curled
Inextricably round about.
Love lay within it and without,
To clasp thee—but in vain! Thy soul
Still shrunk from Him who made thee whole,
Still set deliberate aside
His love!—Now take love! Well betide
Thy tardy conscience!"

So at last to the heart of the poet, driven to his last fortress, contrite, broken, Christ the Doomsman becomes in a moment Christ the Saviour:—

"Then did the Form expand, expand—
I knew Him through the dread disguise
As the whole God within His eyes
Embraced me. . . .
. . . But Easter-Day breaks! But
Christ rises! Mercy every way
Is infinite,—and who can say?"

And "who can say?" So he ends on the same note with which he began. "How very hard it is to be a Christian!" Was this indeed his last word? or would perhaps Browning have said in similar words to those of his great compeer, Tennyson, "How very hard it is to be a Christian, but how very much harder not to be"? I cannot say. But this surely I may say of him and of many another in these days, who owe to Christianity their whole philosophy, their whole view of life, their supreme ideal for the conduct of life, who look to Christianity also for the only answer they can find to

those eternal problems which face and perplex us all, who still like the captive exiles of old worship "towards the Temple," though for the present they may be outside its visible walls; "they cannot, indeed, be excluded from membership at least in the mystical body of Christ, which is 'the blessed company of all faithful people,' for by the only test which Christ Himself suggested for membership, they do belong to His Church, to the soul of His Church, for they 'bring forth the fruits of the Spirit,' they are not yet deserters to the world, they are not fleshly, or cruel, or malicious, but loving and joyful, and kind and gentle and good." Whether Browning was a good churchman or not I cannot say. But I will say that he was a good Christian, he belonged to the "soul of the Church"; he was one of those men who ever serve to remind the Church of that which she is always in danger of forgetting, that no dogma and no fact of history has any true religious life at all, if it is divorced from its spiritual or moral significance. For though the soul — the soul of the Church—may live without the body, the body cannot live without the soul.

I have no time to say more. One final word only of Browning himself. The lessons which he taught us in "Christmas Eve" and "Easter Day" he repeated in other poems over and over again.[9] It is always the same lesson—the moral significance of the Christian ideas — always the lesson which shines out from that Life, which though it was the typical tragedy of mankind, yet was the life of One, of whose sublime optimism, of whose radiant view of human nature, and

its potential goodness, no word of recantation could be drawn, either by the moral agony of which in the Garden of Gethsemane the bloody sweat was the symbol, or by the physical agony of which on the Hill of Calvary the death on the Cross was the reality; the lesson, namely, that the divine love to be found in the heart of Humanity is the witness for a Diviner Love which we can trust for ever and ever, for it is the witness of that "Light which shineth ever out of darkness," "the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

This, my friends, I dare to say, is the witness which has enabled the poet-seers of all the ages, and not least the poet of whom I have tried to speak to you to-day, to sing aloud above the storm waves of this life their "Gloria in Excelsis."

> "The best is yet to be,
> The last of life for which the first was made:
> Our times are in His hand
> Who saith a whole I planned,
> Youth shows but half: trust God, see all, nor be afraid."

And it was because our poet had this optimism, because he had sunshine and love in his heart, because he had grasped so strongly the great Christian idea—the idea of the spiritual ascent and evolution of man—because he was "at one with humanity, and therefore loving, aspiring to God and believing in God, and therefore steeped to the lips in radiant Hope, at one with the past, passionate with the present, and possessing by faith an endless and glorious future," because, too—to quote his own death-words—he was—

"One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph.
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake—"

that his poetry must ever remain for his countrymen a well-spring of spiritual strength, prompting them to abundant moods of worship and reverence, of deep-seated gratitude and sovereign love.[10]

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS TO LECTURE IV

Note 1, p. 170.

The two great Christological passages in S. Paul are Coloss. i. 15–20 and Ephes. i. 10–23. They will be found to justify the statement of my lecture, as they do the following passage in Bishop Lightfoot's "Commentary":—

"S. Paul represents the mediatorial function of Christ as twofold: it is exercised in the natural creation, and it is exercised in the spiritual creation. In both these spheres His initiative is absolute, His control is universal, His action is complete. By His agency the world of nature was created and is sustained. He is at once the beginning and the end of the natural universe. 'All things have been created through Him and unto Him.' Nor is His office in the spiritual world less complete. In the Church, as in the universe, He is sole, absolute, supreme; the primary source from which all life proceeds, and the ultimate arbiter in whom all feuds are reconciled.

"On the one hand, in relation to Deity, He is the visible image of the invisible God. He is not only the chief manifestation of the Divine nature: He exhausts the Godhead manifested. In Him resides the totality of the Divine powers and attributes. For this totality Gnostic teachers had a technical term—the *pleroma*, or plenitude. . . . S. Paul asserts, and repeats the assertion, that the *pleroma* abides absolutely and wholly in Christ as the Word of God. The entire light is concentrated in Him.

"Hence it follows, as regards created things, His supremacy must be absolute. In heaven as in earth, over things

immaterial, as over things material, He is King. Speculations on the nature of intermediate spiritual agencies—their names, their ranks, their offices—were rife in the schools of Judæo-Gnostic thought. 'Thrones, dominations, princedoms, virtues, powers'—these formed part of the spiritual nomenclature which they have invented to describe different grades of angelic mediators. Without entering into these speculations, the Apostle asserts that Christ is Lord of all, the highest and the lowest, whatever rank they may hold, and by whatever name they are called (*cf.* Coloss. i. 16 and Eph. i. 21), for they are parts of creation, and He is the source of creation. Through Him they became, and unto Him they tend. . . . It follows from the true conception of Christ's Person, that He, and He alone, can bridge over the chasm between earth and heaven; for He is at once the lowest and the highest. He raises up man to God, for He brings down God to man. Thus the chain is reduced to a single link, this link being the Word made flesh. As the *pleroma* resides in Him, so is it communicated to us through Him. To substitute allegiance to any other spiritual mediator, is to scorn the connection of the limbs with the Head, which is the centre of life and the mainspring of all energy throughout the body" (Bishop Lightfoot on "The Epistle to the Colossians," pp. 102–5). Following the passage which I have quoted in my lecture, this frank statement of the Bishop (on page 117) may be noted:—"It will be said, indeed, that this conception leaves untouched the philosophical difficulties which beset the subject; that creation still remains as much a mystery as before. This may be allowed. But is there any reason to think that with our present limited capacities the veil which shrouds it ever will or can be removed? The metaphysical speculations of twenty-five centuries have done nothing to raise it. The physical investigations of our own age, from their very nature, can do nothing; for buried with the evolution of phenomena, they lie wholly outside this question, and do not even touch the fringe of the difficulty. But meanwhile revelation has interposed and thrown out the idea, which,

if it leaves many questions unsolved, gives a breadth and unity to our conceptions, at once satisfying our religious needs and linking our scientific instincts with our theological beliefs."

NOTE 2, p. 170.

"The one absolutely impossible conception of God, in the present day, is that which represents Him as an occasional Visitor. Science had pushed the Deist's God farther and farther away, and at the moment when it seemed as if He would be thrust out altogether, Darwinism appeared, and under the guise of a foe did the work of a friend. It has conferred upon philosophy and religion an inestimable benefit, by showing us that we must choose between two alternatives. Either God is everywhere present in Nature, or He is nowhere. He cannot be here and not there; He cannot delegate His power to demigods called 'second causes.' In Nature everything must be His work or nothing. We must frankly return to the Christian view of direct Divine agency, the immanence of Divine power in Nature from end to end, the belief in a God in whom not only we, but all things have their being, or we must banish Him altogether. It seems as if in the providence of God the mission of modern science was to bring home to our unmetaphysical ways of thinking the great truth of the Divine immanence in creation, which is not less essential to the Christian idea of God than to a philosophical view of Nature. And it comes to us almost like a new truth, which we cannot at once fit in with the old.

"Yet the conviction that the Divine immanence must be for our age, as for the Athanasian age, the meeting-point of the religious and the philosophic view of God, is showing itself in the most thoughtful minds on both sides. Our modes of thought are becoming increasingly Greek, and the flood which in our day is surging up against the traditional Christian view of God is prevailingly pantheistic in tone. The pantheism is not less

pronounced because it comes as the last word of a science of Nature, for the wall which once separated physics from metaphysics has given way, and positivism, when it is not the paralysis of reason, is but a temporary resting-place preparatory to a new departure. We are not surprised, then, that one who, like Professor Fiske, holds that 'the infinite and eternal power that is manifested in every pulsation of the universe is none other than the living God,' and who vindicates the belief in a final cause because he cannot believe that 'the sustainer of the universe will put us to permanent intellectual confusion,' should instinctively feel his kinship with Athanasianism and vigorously contend against the view that any part of the universe is 'godless'!" (Aubrey Moore, on "The Christian Doctrine of God," in *Lux Mundi*, 1st edition, pp. 99, 100; "Idea of God," *cf.* sec. v. and pp. 105–110).

NOTE 3, p. 170.

"These are a few broad results of our comparative survey of religions. That religion, however humble the mode of its first appearing, is yet universal to man. That it progresses through the agency of the great individual, the unique personality, the spiritual genius, while popular influence is a counter-agent and makes for its decay. That its various developments have all been partial, and therefore needed completion, if the cravings of the human spirit were ever to be set at rest.

"And all this is in perfect harmony with our Christian belief in a God who, from the day of man's first appearance in the dim twilight of the world, left not Himself without witness in sun and moon and rain and storm-cloud, and the courses of the stars, and the promptings of the conscience and the love of kin; and who the while was lighting every man that cometh into the world—the primæval hunter, the shepherd chieftain, the poets of the Vedas and the Gathas, the Chaldæan astronomer, the Egyptian priest, each, at least in a measure, to spell that witness out aright; ever and anon when a heart was ready revealing Himself with

greater clearness, to one or another chosen spirit, and by their means to other men ; till, at length in the fulness of time, when Jews were yearning for one in whom righteousness should triumph visibly ; and Greeks sighing over the divorce between truth and power, and wondering whether the wise man ever would indeed be king ; and artists and ascetics wandering equally astray, in vain attempt to solve the problem of the spirit and the flesh ; the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. The pre-Christian religions were the age-long prayer. The Incarnation was the answer.

. . . . . .

"But when all this has been said, there is a lingering suspicion in many minds, that even if the details of the doctrine of development are not inconsistent with Christianity, its whole drift is incompatible with any system of opinion which claims to possess finality. And if Christianity were only a system of opinion, the objection might be plausible enough. But its claim to possess finality rests upon its further claim to be much more than a system of opinion. The doctrine of development or evolution, we must remember, is not a doctrine of limitless change, like the old Greek notion of perpetual flux. Species once developed are seen to be persistent in proportion to their versatility, their power, *i.e.* of adapting themselves to the changes of the world around them. And because man through his mental capacity possesses this power to an almost unlimited extent, the human species is virtually permanent. Now, in scientific language, the Incarnation may be said to have introduced a new species into the world—a Divine man transcending past humanity, as humanity transcended the rest of the animal creation, and communicating His vital energy by a spiritual process to subsequent generations of men. And thus viewed there is nothing unreasonable in the claim of Christianity to be at least as permanent as the race which it has raised to a higher power, and endued with a novel strength.

. . . . . .

"The Incarnation opened heaven, for it was the revelation of the Word; but it also reconsecrates earth, for the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. And it is impossible to read history without feeling how profoundly the religion of the Incarnation has been a religion of humanity. The human body itself, which heathendom has so degraded, that noble minds could only view it as the enemy and prison of the soul, acquired a new meaning, exhibited new graces, shone with a new lustre in the light of the Word made flesh; and thence, in widening circles, the family, the society, the state, feel in their turn the impulse of the Christian spirit, with its 'touches of things common, till they rose to touch the spheres.' Literature revived; art flamed into fuller life; even science in its early days owed more than men often think to the Christian temper and the Christian reverence for things once called common or unclean. While the optimism, the belief in the future, the atmosphere of hopefulness, which has made our progress and achievements possible, and which when all counter currents have been allowed for, so deeply differentiates the modern from the ancient world, dates, as a fact of history, from those buoyant days of the early Church, when the creed of suicide was vanquished before the creed of martyrdom, Seneca before St. Paul. It is true that secular civilisation is, as we have seen, in the Christian view, nothing less than the providential civilisation and counterpart of the Incarnation. For the Word did not desert the rest of His creation to become Incarnate. Natural religion and natural morality and the natural play of intellect have their function in the Christian as they had in the pre-Christian ages; and are still kindled by the light that lighteth every man coming into the world. And hence it is that secular thought has so often corrected and counteracted the evil of a Christianity grown professional, and false, and foul" (J. R. Illingworth on the Incarnation and Development, in *Lux Mundi*, pp. 205, 207, and 212).

Note 4, p. 172.

There are those who think, and not without reason as it seems to me, that it would not be too much to say that it was the doctrine of Maurice, rather than that of Pusey and Newman, which for forty years—Maurice began his work in 1835, he died in 1872—"kept the whole forward movement in the social and political life of the English people in union with God and identified with religion." It is his doctrine, moreover, which, idealised and transfigured by the two great poets of the century, Tennyson and Browning, dominant in the teaching of the Cambridge schools of Lightfoot and Westcott and Hort, assimilated, as it would seem, almost unconsciously by the younger Oxford theologians of the *Lux Mundi* school, has during the last twenty years turned so wisely the current of our English Christianity to the consideration of the great social problems of the age, and is at this moment so profoundly affecting, moulding, inspiring, transfiguring the social ideals of the present.

Note 5, p. 173.

"Coleridge was to England, both in theology and literature, what Schleiermacher and Goethe were to Germany. The same antecedent influences had entered into his being. Growing up under the traditions of the eighteenth century, he had undergone a revolution in his spirit as he yielded to the magic power which was transforming the age. He read Plato in the light of his Alexandrian commentators; he studied Kant, and more especially Schelling; he also was thrilled by the prospect of a great future for humanity, of which the French Revolution had seemed to him a foretaste; he bent before Spinoza, receiving the full significance of his thought, and yet discerning more clearly than Schleiermacher had done wherein lay the deficiency of the doctrine of 'the one substance.' It has been said of him that, taking up a volume of Spinoza, he kissed the portrait of

his face, and said, 'This book is a gospel to me'; but he immediately added, 'his philosophy is nevertheless false.' The weakness of Spinoza's teaching, he went on to affirm, lay in his beginning with an 'it is' instead of the 'I am.' In his desultory poems, where the truth of the Divine Immanence is seen inspiring his thought, he reveals also the process in his mind accompanying its reception, as though such a belief were better suited to humanity in its present stage of existence. There are passages, however, in Coleridge's poetry which assert this conviction in language so unqualified that, if we did not know how deep and unshaken was his adherence to the personality of God, we might think them the utterances of undisguised pantheism confounding God with His creation :—

> 'Tis the sublime of man,
> Our noontide majesty, to know ourselves
> Part and proportions of one wondrous whole.
> This fraternises man, this constitutes
> Our charities and bearings. But 'tis God
> Diffused through all that doth make all one whole;
> This the worst superstition, him except
> Aught to desire, supreme Reality.'

Or again, speaking of nature in its relation to God :—

> 'And what if all animated nature
> Be but organic harps diversely framed
> That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
> Plastic and vast one intellectual breeze
> At once the soul of each, and God of all?'
> . . . . . .

"So, too, the spirit of Wordsworth's poetry bears witness to his consciousness of the larger revelation which God was vouchsafing to his age. In his light he saw humanity clothed with a new dignity: even the lowliest and most common things were invested with a sacred charm, because all things were viewed as if in God :—

"I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky and the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit that impress
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

"Even Shelley, who has been set down as an atheist for rejecting, in somewhat contemptuous language, the decision which the popular religious mind had not outgrown, illustrates the working of some deeper, more comprehensive idea of God at the basis of the aspirations, the struggles, the confusions, and the discontent which marked his inner life. 'His subtle intellect,' says his biographer, 'delighted in the thought that behind the universal mind, behind even the life of its life, which he calls spirit, there was some more recondite principle, some more essential substance, the nature of which we cannot imagine or find a name for.'

"The same influence which was remoulding religious thought, and inspiring a fresh literature, appears also in art, whose affiliation with theology is of no accidental kind. The founder of a new school arose in Turner, whose greatness lay in his power to represent nature as it appeared after passing through the medium of the human spirit. The principle of the spiritual interpretation of nature in art, through the power of the human imagination in reading its hidden meaning, was seen by William Blake, to whom religion and artistic insight were identical, though his statement of the principle may seem exaggerated or fanciful :—

"'I assert for myself that I do not behold the outward creation, and that to me it is hindrance, and not action. What! it will be questioned, when the sun rises, do you not see a round disc of fire, somewhat like a guinea? Oh, no! no! I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host, crying, Holy, Holy,

Holy is the Lord God Almighty! I question not my corporal eye any more than I would question a window concerning a sight. I look through it and not with it.'

"It has been a fortunate coincidence that modern science should have been attended by such a companion as modern art, to prevent it from degenerating to a merely physical basis, apart from God and from its inner relations to the human spirit. But science also has contributed to illustrate and enforce the belief that God indwells in His creation. The acknowledgment of its indebtedness to science for the consummation of this truth is a duty which theology has been slow in rendering. The mystics of the last century were hovering in thought about a mystery contained in nature which had some close connection with the religious life. The mystery was no other than the Divine Immanence in nature as revealed in the forces whose activity is everywhere governed by eternal immutable law. Hitherto in the popular conception of the Middle Ages, as well as under the influence of Calvin's theology, the great processes of nature were believed to be carried on from without by angelic mediators, to each of whom was assigned his especial office. It would have been a poor substitute for so beautiful and poetic a belief, if the laws of nature had been shown to be necessary forces apart from God. But when Deity is revealed as immanent in the life of nature, it implies a sense of nearer and closer relationship to God than the angelic host in all its beauty and splendour could ever convey. To have God Himself is the highest reach and aspiration of the soul" (Professor A. V. G. Allen, "The Continuity of Christian Thought," pp. 402–407).

Note 6, p. 174.

"It may seem paradoxical, yet it is hardly hazardous to say that the Maurice Theology owes its power not less to its indulgence than to its correction of the pantheistic tendency of the age. It answers the demand of every ideal philosophy and every

poetic soul for an indwelling Divine Presence, living and acting in all the beauty of the world and the good of human hearts. Its 'Incarnation' is not, as in other schemes, an historical prodigy, setting its period apart as an *Annus Mirabilis* in vehement contrast with the darkness of an otherwise unvisited world; but is rather a revelation, by a supreme instance, of the everlasting Immanence of God, and His consecrating union with our humanity. . . . The new theologians (*i.e.* Maurice and his schools) translated Christianity out of time into eternity; they read in the life and death of Christ no scheme, no plot with astonishing catastrophe; but the symbol and sample of constant Divine life with men, and of human sonship to God, disclosing relations which had for ever been and would for ever be; only adding now the glad surprise that the sigh for better life, the response of conscience to high appeals, the inward sympathy with all righteousness are no lovely visions, but the personal communion of the perfect with the imperfect mind" (Dr. Martineau: Introduction to Tayler's "Religious Life of England," p. 9). This section of Dr. Martineau's chapter, and an article in the *Spectator*, November 20, 1869, entitled "Maurice, Theologian or Humanist," give the most faithful interpretation of Maurice's teaching which is known to me.

Note 7, p. 177.

"In Browning's 'Paracelsus' a great aspirer after the absolute —the absolute of knowledge—fails in his quest, and yet does not wholly fail. He fails because he has tried to compel what is infinite to enter into the limits of this finite life; he does not fail because from the low room in which he lies dying he passes forth to follow the fountains of light and of love up toward God Himself. Two particulars in his work assign to Browning his place in the literary history of our country. First, he attempts to establish a harmony between what is infinite and what is finite in man's nature. . . . Hence infinite desire, infinite

aspiration, is the glory and virtue of our manhood; and through art, and through science, through human love, we ascend unsatisfied to God. If, on the other hand, we rest in any attainment of knowledge, or love, or creation of beauty by art, accepting it for its own sake and as final, we have forfeited our high distinction as men, we have become beasts which graze in the paddock and do not look up.

. . . . . .

"Secondly, what determines Browning's place in the history of our literature is that he represents militant transcendentalism, the transcendental movement at odds with the scientific. His acceptance of the Christian revolution, say rather his acceptance of the Man Christ Jesus, lies at the very heart of Browning's poetry; *and in the mode of his accepting the Christ of history he approaches close to the spirit of Maurice's theology.* With an energy of intellect such as few poets have possessed, he unites a spiritual ardour which if not associated on the one hand with an eager and combative intellect, on the other with strong human passions and affections, might have made Browning a religious mystic; and he sets his intellect to defend the suggestions or intuitions of the spirit. In his 'Caliban upon Setebos,' the poet has with singular and almost terrible force represented what must be the natural theology of one who is merely an intellectual animal, devoid of spiritual cravings, sensibilities, and checks. It is these which discover to us not only the power of God, but the love of God everywhere around us, and which enable us to perceive that there is a supreme instance or manifestation of God's love, which is very Christ.

"But what of the historical Jesus of Nazareth? Is He not disappearing from the world, criticised away and dissolved into a Christ-myth?

'We gazed our fill
With upturned faces on as real a face
That, stooping from grave music and mild fire,
Took in our homage, made a visible place,
Through many a depth of glory, gyre on gyre,
For the dim human tribute. Was this true?'

And is that Divine force receding out of reach of our prayers and praise into the darkness, until at last we shall lose it altogether? Browning's answer implies some such creed as, if we were required to seek a label for it, we should name 'Christian Pantheism.' He looks at the spectacle of the world and life as it plays, ocean-like, around each of us, and shows itself all alive and spiritual. The fishermen of Galilee told of a Son of God who eighteen hundred years ago became flesh and dwelt with men; and this becomes credible because here and now we behold the miracle of an omnipresent and eternal love of God :—

> 'Why, where's the need of Temple when the walls
> Of the world are that? what use of swells and falls
> From Levites' choir, priests' cries, and trumpet calls?
>
> That one Face, far from vanish rather grows,
> Or decomposes but to recompose,
> Becomes my universe that feels and knows.'"

(Professor Edward Dowden: "Studies in Literature," pp. 80–83.)

NOTE 8, p. 187.

Browning in "'A Death in the Desert' continued his apology for the Christian faith. The apologetics are, however, in the first instance, poems, and they remain poems at the last. The imaginary scene of the death of the Evangelist John is rendered with the finest art; its dignity is that of a certain noble bareness; in the dim-lighted grotto are the aged disciple and the little group of witnesses, to whom he utters his legacy of words; at the cave's edge is the Bactrian crying from time to time his bird-like cry of assurance: 'Outside was all noon and the burning blue.' The slow return of the dying man to consciousness of his surroundings is as true as if it were studied from a death-bed; his sudden awakening at the words, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life,' arrives not as a dramatic surprise, but as the simplest surprise of

nature—light breaking forth before sunset. The chief speaker of the poem is chosen because the argument is one concerning faith that comes through love, and S. John was the disciple who had learnt love's deepest secrets. The dialectic proceeds along large lines, which have only the subtilty of simplicity. The verse moves gravely, tenderly, often weighted with monosyllables; a pondering dwelling verse; and great single lines arise so naturally that while they fill the mind with a peculiar power, they are felt to be of one texture with the whole. Thus, for example :—

> 'We would not lose
> The last of what might happen on his face;'

And this :—

> 'When there was mid sea and the mighty things;'

And this :—

> 'Lie bare to the universal prick of light;'

And these :—

> 'The Bactrian was but a wild childish man,
> And could not write nor speak but only loved.'

"The faith of these later days is the same as that of the first century, and is not the same. The story and the teaching of Christ had alike one end—to plant in the human consciousness the utterance of Divine Love, and to make us in our degree conscious partakers of that Love. Where love is there is Christ. Our conceptions of God are relative to our own understanding; but God as power, God as a communicating intelligence, God as love—Father, Son, and Spirit—is the utmost that we can conceive of things above us. Let us now put that knowledge, imperfect though it may be, to use. Power, intelligence, love—these around us everywhere: they are not mere projections from our own brain or hand or heart; and by us they are inconceivable otherwise than as personal attributes. The historical story of

Christ is not lost, for it has grown into a larger assurance of faith. We are not concerned with the linen clothes and napkins of the empty sepulchre; Christ is arisen. Why revert to discuss miracles? The work of miracles—whatever they may have been—was long ago accomplished. The knowledge of the Divine Love, its appropriation by our own hearts, and the putting forth of that love in our lives—such for us is the Christian faith. Such is the work of Christ accomplishing itself in humanity at the present time. And the Christian story is no myth, but a reality. Not because we can prove true the beliefs of the first century, but because those beliefs contained within them a larger and more enduring belief. The acorn has not perished because it has expanded into an oak.

"This, reduced here to the baldest statement, is the substance of the dying testimony of Browning's S. John. It is thrown into lyrical form as the poet's own testimony in the 'Epilogue' to the volume of 1864, and in the great poem of 1868–69, 'The Ring and the Book,' the Venerable Pope expresses Browning's highest thought. And the Pope's exposition of the Christianity of our age is identical with that of S. John. . . . The acknowledgment of God in Christ, the divine self-sacrifice of love, for the Pope as for S. John solves all questions in the earth and out of it. . . . Let us give over the endless task of unproving and reproving the already proved; rather let us straightway put our truth to its proper uses" (Professor Dowden, "Robert Browning," pp. 241–43).

NOTE 9, p. 193.

"*What is the sum of the poet's thoughts about it* ('a future life')? What has he added to the criticism of belief in this matter? By the method of his art, as by the temper and breadth of his statement, he has put the question on its proper basis, and given it its true scope. He has taken the matter in a large way, implying the slight and uncertain value of single arguments, the cumulative force of the whole case. It is no question of

evidences and logic. It is a question of man's true natural power; and a question not simply of the inadequacy and unsatisfactoriness of life, but of life's drift and 'promise.' And so he has dwelt on the energy and reach of man; for the argument depends on what man is capable of and worth. And he is very frank about the unsatisfactoriness of life as we see it, whether tested by conscience or by judgment; its inadequacy to man's affections, aims, and powers. The world is intelligible and tolerable, though with difficulties then, if there be 'a life beyond.' And the order and method of life seem rational on that basis; its experience and discipline seem, then, to have a purpose. But the 'heart' and personal claims perplex the question. It is not what men wish, but what they are fit for that must count. Man's continued power to serve the ends of the universe must be the ground of hope. That is the principle and the test of the true immortality. The endurance of whatever is essential of the true and the Divine is assured—the completion of the value, the solution of the problems, and the realisation of the ideals of the Spirit. Does that imply personality in the after-life?—that is the question eagerly pressed. We do not know. Our poet has nowhere evolved an answer. He wisely leaves it; though the whole principle of his art conveys that impression of the value of personality that you may well hold his drift to be on the side of that idea, not as a matter of sentiment, but of science.

"Then he has other ideas that may seem more practical. No one has so forcibly put the folly of 'losing' this life in any way in the name of another. It is life that matters, not existence. Life here and everywhere belongs to those who live. The great question is not about a 'future life,' but about realising the true idea of this life, and so leading up with energy to the life that may be when this no longer serves . . . life to come . . . is not a 'heaven,' a stage of finality and fulfilment. It is the life of the soul rising and expanding through what may be an 'infinite series' of lives 'unhasting yet unresting,' because it serves no 'taskmaster,' but in love and power fulfils the very spirit of life.

"And here the poet approves his grasp of that principle of which I said he is so true an interpreter, the great Christian idea, the idea of spiritual ascent and evolution as the chief law of life. That is the meaning of this life. It is the ground and law of all life to come. If that principle hold good of man, life to come is possible and desirable: if it hold good, life and duty here, and hereafter, are great—are in truth spiritually infinite and of eternal value" (James Fotheringham, "Studies in the Poetry of Robert Browning," p. 282).

The following interesting letter was written by Mr. Browning in 1876 to a friend who, believing herself to be dying, wrote to thank him for the help she had derived from his poems, mentioning particularly "Rabbi ben Ezra" and "Abt Vogler":—

"It is a great thing—the greatest—that a human being should have passed the probation of life, and sum up its experience in a witness to the power and love of God. I dare congratulate you. All the help I can offer, in my poor degree, is the assurance that I see ever more reason to hold by the same hope, and that by no means in ignorance of what has been advanced to the contrary; and for your sake I would wish it to be true that I had so much of 'genius' as to permit the testimony of an especially privileged insight to come in aid of the ordinary argument. For I know I myself have been aware of the communication of something more subtle than a ratiocinative process, when the convictions of 'genius' have thrilled my soul to its depths: as when Napoleon, shutting up the New Testament, said of Christ—'Do you know that I am an understander of men? Well, He was no man!' ('Savez-vous que je me connais en hommes? Eh bien, celui-là ne fut pas un homme.') Or as when Charles Lamb, in a gay fancy with some friends as to how he and they would feel if the greatest of the dead were to appear suddenly in flesh and blood once more, on the final suggestion, 'And if Christ entered this room?' changed his manner at once, and stuttered out, as his manner was when moved, 'You see—if Shakespeare entered, we should all rise; if *He* appeared, we must kneel.' Or, not

to multiply instances, as when Dante wrote what I will transcribe from my wife's Testament—wherein I recorded it fourteen years ago—'Thus I believe, thus I affirm, thus I am certain it is, and that from this life I shall pass to another better, there, where that Lady lives of whom my soul was enamoured.' Dear friend, I may have wearied you in spite of your goodwill. God bless you, sustain and receive you! Reciprocate this blessing with yours affectionately, ROBERT BROWNING."

NOTE 10, p. 195.

Beside Browning's restatement of the great moral affirmations of Humanity, I should like to place this quotation from a paper entitled "Ecce Deus," by Sir Oliver Lodge, in which that distinguished man of science refocuses for us, in the light of the great scientific hypothesis of evolution, the Christian doctrine of the Immanence of the Divine in Man. "The Divinity of Jesus is the truth which now requires to be re-perceived, to be illumined afresh by new knowledge; to be cleansed and revivified by the wholesome flood of scepticism which has poured over it; it can be freed now from all trace of grovelling superstition, and can be recognised freely and enthusiastically: the Divinity of Jesus, and of all other noble and saintly souls, in so far as they too have been inflamed by a spark of Deity—in so far as they too can be recognised as manifestations of the Divine. Nor is it even through man alone that the revelation comes, though through man and the highest man it comes chiefly; the revelation can be glimpsed in all the processes of Nature, so far as human vision, in the person of its seers and poets and men of science, has been as yet sufficiently cleared and strengthened to perceive it.

"For consider what is involved in the astounding idea of Evolution and Progress as applied to the whole Universe. Either it is a fact or it is a dream. If it be a fact, what an illuminating fact it is! God is one; the Universe is an aspect

and a revelation of God. The Universe is struggling upward to a perfection not yet attained. I see in the mighty process of Evolution an eternal struggle towards more and more self-perception, and fuller and more all-embracing existence, of the Deity. In some parts of the Universe perhaps already the ideal conception has been attained; and the region of such attainment —the full blaze of self-conscious Deity—is too bright for mortal eyes, is utterly beyond our highest thoughts; but in part the attainment is as yet very imperfect; in what we know as the material part, which is our present home, it is nascent, or only just beginning; and our own struggles and efforts and disappointments and aspirations—the felt groaning and travailing of Creation—these are evidence of the effort, indeed they themselves are part of the effort, towards fuller and completer and more conscious existence. On this planet man is the highest outcome of the process so far, and is therefore the highest representation of Deity that here exists. Terribly imperfect as yet, because so recently evolved, he is nevertheless a being which has at length attained to consciousness and free-will, a being unable to be coerced by the whole force of the Universe, against his will; a spark of the Divine Spirit, therefore, never more to be quenched. Open still to awful horrors, to agonies of remorse, but to floods of joy also, he persists, and his destiny is largely in his own hands; he may proceed up or down, he may advance towards a magnificent ascendency, he may recede towards depths of infamy. He is not coerced: he is guided and influenced, but he is free to choose. The evil and the good are necessary correlatives: freedom to choose the one involves freedom to choose the other.

. . . . . .

"Such ideas, the ideas of development and progress, extend even up to God himself, according to the Christian conception. So we return to that with which we started:—The Christian idea of God is not that of a being outside the Universe, above its struggles and advances, looking on and taking no part in the

process, *solely* exalted, beneficent, self-determined and complete; no, it is also that of a God which loves, which yearns, which suffers, which keenly laments the rebellious and misguided activity of the free agents whom he has brought into being as part of himself, which enters into the storm and conflict, and is subject to conditions as a part of it all; conditions not artificial and transitory, but inherent in the process of producing free and conscious beings, and essential to the full self-development even of Deity.

"It is a marvellous and bewildering thought, but whatever its value, and whether it be an ultimate revelation or not, it is the revelation of Christ. Whether it be considered blasphemous or not, and in his own day it was certainly considered blasphemous, this was the idea he grasped during those forty days of solitary communion, and never subsequently let go.

"This is the truth which has been reverberating down the ages ever since, and has been the hidden inspiration of saint, apostle, prophet, martyr, and, in however dim and vague a form, has given hope and consolation to the unlettered and poverty-stricken millions.

"A God that could understand, that could suffer, that could sympathise, that had felt the extremity of human anguish, the agony of bereavement, had submitted even to the brutal hopeless torture of the innocent, and had become acquainted with the pangs of death,—this has been the chief consolation of terrestrial religion, whether Western or Eastern, whether Christian or Buddhist. This is the extraordinary conception of Godhead to which we have at this stage risen. 'This is my beloved Son.' The Christian God is revealed as the incarnate spirit of humanity, or rather the incarnate spirit of humanity is recognised as a real intrinsic part of God. 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.'

"Infinitely patient the Universe has been while man has groped his way to this truth: so simple and consoling in one of its aspects, so inconceivable and incredible in another. Dimly and partially it has been seen by all the prophets, and doubtless

by many of the Pagan saints. Dimly and partially we see it now; but in so far as Christianity has any vitality this is its vital element. It is not likely to be the attribute of any one religion alone; it may be the essence of truth in all terrestrial religions, but it is conspicuously Christian. Its boldest statement was when a child was placed in the midst and was regarded as a symbol of the Deity; but it was foreshadowed even in the childish conceptions of Olympus, whose gods and goddesses were affected with the passions of men; it is the root fact underlying the superstitions of idolatry and all varieties of anthropomorphism. Thou shalt have none other Gods but me :— and with dim eyes and dull ears and misunderstanding hearts men have sought to obey the commandment, seeking after God if haply they might find Him; while all the time their God was very nigh unto them, in their midst and of their fellowship, sympathising with their struggles, and recognising even in their own poor nature some dim and broken fragments of Himself."

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